AJÑĀNA

Theory of Ignorance

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PREFACE

The subject of Ajñāna has been discussed by us, from time to time, at the Indian Institute of Philosophy. We cannot be said to ascribe the same philosophic value to the notion nor do we completely agree as to its proper interpretation. Still it is recognised by us to be a most important philosophical idea on the proper interpretation of which the understanding of the Vedāntic system mainly depends. It is on this account that we are putting our views on the subject together and placing them side by side for the public in a single book. To avoid unnecessary controversy and to approach the subject with a dispassionate mind with the sole aim of giving a critical exposition of it, we have not communicated with each other our personal views on the subject during our writing. It is possible, therefore, that there might, in places, be repetition of the same ideas, or, at any rate, avoidable lengthiness. But we hope that this will not materially affect the value of the work as a whole. The views expressed represent our individual stand-points only. The readers can judge for themselves how far they also represent orthodox Vedāntic thought and how far they can be said to be generally acceptable on grounds of pure reason.

Indian Institute of Philosophy,
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I

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G. R. MALKANI

I

Ajñāna, taken simply, means ignorance. This fact of ignorance is the fundamental postulate of every philosophical system. Philosophy aims at knowledge,—the knowledge of reality as it is. This aim would not be capable of being realised, if we had no apprehension of reality at all. Also, if we knew reality as it is in its essential nature, there would be no room for any knowledge to be obtained through mere thinking or philosophical reflection. We must therefore pre-suppose, as the fundamental postulate of all philosophical thinking, that we know reality somehow, but not as it is. Our knowledge is infected with error. The object of philosophical thinking is to dispel this error, and make our knowledge adequate to reality. This erroneous knowledge of reality is what we should more appropriately understand by the term ajñāna.

It is sometimes supposed that in philosophy we should attempt an ultimate explanation of things, or seek an answer to the 'why' and the 'wherefore' of things with which experience makes us acquainted. Now so far as this involves an investigation of empirical facts, the empirical sciences may be relied upon to give the best answer that is possible under the circumstances. But in so far as what is wanted is a non-empirical principle of explanation of that which is experienced, the demand involves the tacit admission that our experience as such is not adequate to reality; it involves, in other words, the non-reality of empirical fact-hood. We have then not to explain anything; that which we would like to have

explained is not what it is; it is not real. There is a demand simply to pass from this no-fact to fact; or in other words, from error to knowledge. This is evidently the best explanation, if explanation is possible, of that which appears to exist but does not in fact exist.

The system of Advaita Vedānta is a system of extreme monism or non-dualism. It therefore makes a special use of this concept of *avidyā*. The only reality is the Absolute, the one eternal intelligent substance. Beside it, nothing else exists. The world of the manifold that we appear to know is a mere appearance; it is non-existent in the real. This apparent existence of the world is due to avidyā. There are thus only two important concepts in this system,—the concept of Brahman and the concept of avidyā.

It is to be noted that the concept of avidyā is not used to *account* for the world-appearance. Avidyā is not some real entity which exists before the world-appearance, and gives rise to it in some mysterious way. What we are confronted with is not avidyā, but the world-appearance. If this appearance constituted part of reality itself, if it were ultimately real, there would be no such thing as avidyā. But if it does not form such a part, then in so far as it is perceived to be real, it is misperceived. Avidyā is only another name for this misperception. It is not an explanatory concept. It is only a descriptive name for the perception of the illusory or the non-real. It is not some mysterious entity that somehow accounts for the illusory appearance of the world.

It follows that avidyā is not to be compared to any of those ultimate entities which are sometimes supposed

to be the cause of the being of the world, such as God, Prakṛti, or formless matter. These latter must be conceived to exist whether the world of which they are the cause exists or not. Avidyā can never be supposed so to exist. If there is no illusory appearance of anything, there can be no erroneous perception either.* Avidyā therefore cannot exist before the appearance of the world and cause that appearance. The being of avidyā and the being of the world are mutually implied, and partake of the same sort of reality. The preception of the illusory is itself illusory. But this is a highly controversial point and we shall have to discuss it at some length later on.

II

It may now be argued that the postulate of avidyā is not necessitated by the facts of experience. The world around us is real and not illusory in character. It is rather the standard by which we judge concrete reality. It is objectivity *par excellence;* and it is certainly more real than anything that is merely subjective and so evanescent.

We do not deny that the world is something, and that it is objective. But is this objectivity, in which we

* This view cannot be said to be accepted by all Vedāntic writers. Some of them distinguish *avidyā* from *adhyās*. According to them, avidyā is the cause of erroneous superimposition. It might therefore be presumed to exist before the latter, and constitute its material cause. I have rejected this view which interprets avidyā objectively. My reasons will become evident in the sequel.

find its reality, significant of true being? It would not be difficult to show that objectivity does not mean independence of the subjective, or self-subsistent being. The objective world has only an appearance of independence, but no real independence. We may therefore even hazard the opinion that the apparent independence and self-subsistence of the world around us is only an illusory appearance. The facts of illusory perception, which has all the resemblance to real perception, only strengthen this view. We cannot tell the real from the illusory in the domain of the sensible. There are no *ultimate tests* which can distinguish the one from the other. The realm of the objective is the realm of the illusory. It is an opinion that is opposed to the popular view of the matter. But there is no system of philosophy, that is sufficiently thorough-going, that does not conflict with the common view on several important issues.*

We shall enter here into a brief consideration of the reality of matter, which constitutes the basis of the reality of the objective world, to prove our point. Materiality is generally defined 'by means of the characteristics commonly known as the primary qualities of matter—size, shape, position, mobility, and impenetrability'.† How can anything now be proved to possess these characteristics? It is evident that it is only through what we perceive. But what we perceive are certain sensible qualities, or what may be more appropriately called sense-data. Does the percep-

* See McTaggart, *Nature of Existence*, vol. II, p. 195.

† *Ibid.*, article 353.

tion of the sense-data justify us in inferring anything beyond them, called matter? Now the qualities which the sense-data are apprehended to possess are either the qualities which matter also is supposed to possess, or they are different qualities. If it is the former, there is no possible way of distinguishing matter from the sense-data, and there is no room for any inference from the one to the other. If it is the latter, the sense-data can never warrant us in inferring anything beyond them; there is no perceived connection between two different entities which may form the ground of an inference. In either case, the existence of matter as something distinct from the sense-data is not proved.

We might argue that matter is the same thing as sense-data; and that if sense-data exist, matter exists. But here, firstly, matter is supposed to have a certain invariable quality in respect of its shape, etc., while the sense-data relating to that quality may be quite varied. It may perhaps be possible to reconcile this opposition somehow. But again can we really maintain that the sense-data have the self-subsistence which we attribute to matter? It is admitted even by those who do not regard the sense-data as mental that the same sense-datum cannot be both coloured and hard. Also, a sense-datum cannot undergo any change and continue to be spoken of as the same sense-datum.* It has not the sort of being that can maintain itself through

* McTaggart, *op. cit.*, article 376. In his *Metaphysic*, Ch. II 'Of the quality of things,' Lotze has very admirably shown that if we conceive the essence of a thing to lie in a simple quality, we cannot reconcile this idea with the idea that the thing is what changes. Simplicity of essence is incompatible with outer change.

certain changes according to law. Rather the only law according to which it may be said to change, is the changing sensation. What then remains to it of materiality, independence, and self-subsistence? Lastly, the sense-data can have no qualities which they are not perceived as having. Their being is thus coextensive with what is actually perceived. We cannot therefore legitimately speak of sense-data as existing unperceived. This is at any rate very different from what we hold about matter. The reality of the sense-data implicates the reality of the spirit.

It has been held that the sense-data are not only extra-mental, but also that they *are* what they are perceived to be; there can be no erroneous perception regarding them. It will be seen that these two positions are really incompatible. If there is something extra-mental given in sense-perception, then there must necessarily be the possibility of both right and wrong perception of it,—in other words, of perceptual error. It is only where that which we perceive is not distinct from the perception of it, and does not exist in itself, that the possibility of erroneous perception is ruled out. But then there is no real perception left. If however we believe that there is real perception, and that what we perceive is independent of the perception of it, there must be possibility of error; and we hope later to show more convincingly that all such perception is really erroneous perception.

We started with the existence of matter. We are led to postulate nothing in place of it except sensible appearance that cannot be proved to exist apart from the subject apprehending. But even if this conclusion

should be wrong, any thorough-going analysis of matter is bound ultimately to lead us to the reality of spirit. Berkeley was led to the reality of an omniscient mind. Leibnitz reduced matter to certain ultimate spiritual entities called monads. Hegel and all those who have been influenced by his thought have regarded matter as such and as divorced from the spirit, as non-existent. Even Christian thinkers who do not regard matter as ultimately unreal, do not give it a being coeval with that of the spirit. Matter is *created*, while the real spirit is uncreated, self-existent and eternal. Plato regarded matter as synonymous with non-being. Aristotle indeed gave it a certain potential being. But this being could not be actualised without form, which was essentially a principle of intelligence and therefore spiritual in character. In fact every philosopher, who has tried to go deeper into the nature of things, has had to admit in one form or another that matter cannot be real in itself, and apart from the spirit. Intelligence is the ground of reality of all things.

Taking the above conclusion to be substantially true, we shall here ask,—what is the exact nature of the relation between the two entities? Two main alternatives may be considered for the purpose: (*a*) the existence of matter is somehow dependent upon that of the spirit; and (*b*) what we call matter is really spirit: we misapprehend the latter, when we apprehend it as matter. In our opinion, the first alternative leads directly to the second which alone is ultimately capable of being justified.

Dependence of matter upon spirit may be variously conceived. We shall note three different views:

(1) Matter has been created by the Absolute Spirit through a fiat of its will. The material world has thus no ultimate being of its own. But it is real as now appearing to us. Now it is evident that the process of creation is not intelligible to us. That however cannot by itself constitute an objection to its reality. There are many things which we do not understand but which may nevertheless be real. Still we cannot shirk the question, —does the world *as now appearing* exist apart from any connection with, or support of, the spirit? In other words, is the world created once for all in the distant past, or is the creative act co-extensive with it? If it is the former, there is grave doubt whether the world has been created at all; for if it can exist now without any form of dependence upon the spirit, there is no reason why it could not have so existed, in the same independent way, from time without beginning. If it is the latter, the world has no present being apart from the creative activity of God. This means that it has no being in itself at any time. Its reality is spirit and whatever activity belongs to the spirit. Its appearance as self-existent must be accounted as due to erroneous perception.

(2) The visible universe has been put forth through a playful action or fancy on the part of the Absolute Spirit. It has not been, so to say, ordered into being. It has simply been made to appear through a power analogous to that of the juggler or the magician. The latter does not really bring into being something that did not exist before. He merely makes it 'appear to exist' to deluded eyes. But if this is so, the world evidently has no more reality than the objects of fancy

or of delusion. If such objects can be said to be put forth, they are as easily withdrawn from being. They have no being of their own. The world as thus conceived is as good as negated in the spirit. The appearance of its reality is due to erroneous perception.

(3) The physical universe around us is a certain revelation or self-expression of the spirit. A substance is revealed in its qualities. We can never know a substance except through its qualities. The qualities do not exist by themselves. They have only dependent existence. At the same time, this dependence does not imply unreality. The qualities really exist. They partake of the reality of the substance whose nature they express. Similarly, what we find around us is the revealed form of the spirit, and partakes of its reality; it cannot be pronounced unreal, although it has only dependent being.

Now the qualities are either distinct from substance, or they are not. If they are distinct, they cannot partake of its reality. If they are not distinct, they are the substance itself and it is wrong to speak of them as qualities. The same difficulty turns up when we try to understand the relation of the revealed nature to God or the one true substance. We may indeed hold that the revealed nature is God. But this itself is capable of two different interpretations. It may mean that there is no world, but only God; this amounts to the denial of the world, or acosmism. It may mean, on the other hand, that there is only the world, but no God as distinct from it; this clearly amounts to atheism, or the denial of God. It is thus evident that we cannot reconcile the reality of the one with the reality of the other. If we

must save the reality of the spirit, we must admit that the world does not really exist. That it appears so to exist is only because we misperceive the real, which is essentially spirit.

Advaita Vedānta maintains that the whole universe of the visible is an illusory appearance, and that the only reality is the one absolute spirit. We misperceive the real when we perceive it as something extended in space and time and as determined by the law of causality,—in other words, when we perceive it as matter. This position is not altogether novel or paradoxical. Many other philosophers have held similar views. Mc-Taggart, for example, holds that matter does not exist, and that what we perceive as matter is really spirit. The Vedāntic thesis is therefore quite plausible; and this is all that it is possible to show here. But if we accept that thesis, the problem of cosmic ajñāna or erroneous perception of reality has to be faced.

III

It will here be argued: But does not the admission of the fact of ajñāna involve us in self-contradiction? There is Brahman, the Absolute Reality; and there is also ajñāna, or misperception of that reality. This evidently leads to dualism. Brahman can no longer be said to be alone real. There is, beside it, such a thing as ajñāna. The original thesis contradicts itself.

It will not satisfy the objector if we reply: 'The only way that anybody can assert the reality of one absolute substance is by the admission that the appearance of many-ness (to whomsoever it may appear)

is illusory and due to an error of perception, and that under the circumstances a certain dualism of expression could not possibly be avoided.' He will insist, because dualism cannot be avoided in expression and in thought, there must be ground for it in the nature of things themselves. We may plead that thought must be transcended, because it is essentially discriminative and so dualistic in form, and that he who perceives the real and does not merely think it, perceives nothing beside it; he becomes the real. We shall be told that this will render impossible any rational approach to the knowledge of reality; mysticism will transplant reason, and we shall be left with no reliable means of knowing the true nature of things.

Let us therefore ask the question whether any philosophical interpretation of the concept of avidyā justifies the contention that there is ultimate dualism, and whether the assertion of one absolute reality is really self-contradictory. Now it is evident that in so far as there is the perception of the 'many,' this perception is what it is. It cannot be denied. There is no self-contradiction anywhere. Self-contradiction only arises when we suppose that the 'many' do not exist, while the perception of the 'many' exists; for then we have, beside the absolute reality, the perception in question; and this amounts to saying that both Brahman and the perception are real,—or in other words, that the many are real. If now we can show that the perception of the illusory is itself illusory, and that if the 'many' do not exist, the perception of the 'many' cannot be said to exist either, the supposed self-contradiction will clearly disappear. The question therefore which we

shall try to answer is,—does the perception of the illusory exist?

The *prima facie* answer appears to be that even though the illusory does not exist, the perception of the illusory does exist. I perceive a rope to be a snake. The snake is non-existent in the rope. But my perception of the snake is a fact of reality. Nobody who has passed through this experience can deny that he really perceived a snake in the place of the rope in question. It appears therefore that while the illusory does not exist, the perception of the illusory cannot be denied to be a fact of reality.

The man saw a snake. But *what* snake did he see? He did not see any real snake which existed in the place in which he thinks he saw it. Still if his perception is a fact, it can only relate to some determinate object,— or, as in this case, to 'that snake.' But *that snake* is not that snake. It is no snake at all. And if this snake is what is perceived, then the contradiction in the object is transferred to the perception of it.

There is evident contradiction in the notion 'that snake' and the notion 'not existing'. We call something 'that snake,' and in the same breath affirm that 'that snake is not that snake.' The contradiction is not less patent than the contradiction involved in the conception 'a square circle,' or the conception of 'a son of a barren woman.' The perception of such a self-contradictory content is a perception and yet not that perception. Can we say that it exists? It exists only in so far as its object exists. But the object admittedly does not exist and is not a possible existent. It is non-existent at all times,

and so must be the apparent perception of it; for the perception is nothing if it is not the perception of *that object*; and that object we have found to be indefinable and self-contradictory.*

It might be contended here: The reality of the perception need not be relative to the reality of its object. We know directly through introspection the fact of our perception. The reality of this subjective fact of perception is not dependent upon any other fact. It is not depenednt upon the objective reality or otherwise of the content. 'That snake' may have had no place in the objective scheme of things, but that it was perceived to be that snake cannot be doubted. The same objection may be put in a slightly different way. There can be no such thing as subjective illusion; and yet the view which doubts the reality of the perception of the illusory involves such a possibility.

The above argument is based on the wrong idea that the subjective can be known and studied in itself without the objective to which it contains an explicit reference. The truth is that the subjective does not stand by itself. It necessarily implicates the objective. If it were otherwise, there would be no such thing as erroneous perception. There would be no experience of cancellation of the form 'this snake is no snake.' We could not, for example, be said to have perceived a subjective snake when we perceive a rope to be a snake. A subjective snake is not liable to cancellation. We can never say of it that it is not a snake but a rope.

* I am indebted to Prof. K. C. Bhattacharyya for the very clear exposition of this argument in some of his writings.

A subjective snake can only be what it is. It can never be otherwise. It can never form the content of an erroneous perception, and can never be cancelled. The snake that is cancelled is not a subjective snake; and the perception of this snake cannot be a real subjective fact apart from any reference to the snake that is perceived. We have already shown that the snake that is perceived is a self-contradictory snake. The perception of this snake must therefore be equally self-contradictory. It is the perception of that snake, and yet not that perception; because the snake perceived is that snake and yet not that snake. In general we might say that the reality of the subjective fact of perception is not independent of the reality of its object; in fact they partake of the same kind of reality. Thus objects that are never cancelled are said to be really perceived. But can we say that ghosts are really perceived (taking ghosts to be non-existent), or that the objects of a hallucination or a dream are really perceived? The perception of such objects is clearly as unreal as the objects themselves.

It will be admitted by all that a thing which is both real and unreal cannot exist; it is self-contradictory. An illusory object is said to be neither; it is different both from the real and from the unreal. It is different from the real, because it does not in fact exist. It is different from the unreal, because it appears to be something and not merely nothing. Can we say that such a thing occupies a position intermediate between that which is real and that which is wholly unreal like the horn of a hare? Must we admit a new category, the category of the indeterminate to accommodate the illusory? It is

often thought that we must. And so far as appearances go, the conception of a new category, the category of the indeterminate, seems indeed justified. The illusory is neither real nor unreal; it is *anirvacanīya.* But it would be a mistake to suppose that what is neither real nor unreal involves no self-contradiction, or that it has any more being than what is patently self-contradictory.

Taken in itself, what is neither real nor unreal is not a possible datum of thought; we cannot think it significantly. It is, if anything, absolute nothing. Can we say that it is any more real than a square circle? We evidently cannot. But it is supposed that the illusory, while it is different both from the real and from the unreal, has a certain 'given-ness' about it. The illusory snake, for example, cannot be said to be not given at all. And so far as it has this appearance of given-ness, it is not altogether non-existent like the purely self-contradictory, such as a square circle or the son of a barren woman. It may be said to be more real than the latter.

This reasoning is clearly fallacious. If the illusory snake is given, then it is so far real and not non-existent; and as something cannot be more or less given, so neither can it be more or less non-existent. The illusory snake then, in so far as it is given, is real and not illusory. But if it is illusory, then there is doubt even as to its given-ness. A thing which admittedly does not exist cannot be given. That it is our human weakness to continue to regard the illusory snake as somehow given, does not in the least affect the fact of its complete and absolute non-existence. It is thus no more real than the merely self-contradictory or *tuccha.*

Let us however suppose that the illusory object cannot be denied all being. It is not *tuccha*. But if this is so, it must have a certain element of being which is not liable to cancellation. The object as possessing this element cannot be illusory. But again, in so far as it is illusory, it must be wholly so. It must be altogether non-existent. It cannot exist more or less. The idea that something can exist more or less is really unintelligible. From whatever point of view we regard a thing, it must either exist or not exist. It cannot exist more or less. The attempt to conceive the illusory as something intermediate between being and non-being is really an attempt to unite in it what are contradictory characters, real being and real non-being. The attempt is accordingly doomed to failure. We conclude that there is no intermediate category between being and non-being. The illusory does not present a new problem. It is wholly and absolutely non-existent.

If our reasoning is correct, the illusory does not exist and cannot be said to be perceived. The supposed perception is as non-existent as its object. But if that is so, ajñāna, which is only another name for erroneous perception, cannot exist. There is thus no contradiction in saying that the Absolute Reality alone exists. A dualism would only be entailed if it could be shown that while the 'many' are illusory, the perception of the 'many' is real. This, we have seen, is not possible. Ajñāna is itself illusory and non-existent.

IV

It might be said here that our account of ajñāna is too subjectivistic. It is indeed true that we, as individuals, perceive the world or the 'many' of which it consists. But this is not the whole truth. We ourselves form part of that world. We distinguish one individual from other individuals, and each of them again from the surrounding physical world. The individual as individual cannot be the ultimate reality. He is part of the illusory manifold. He is in a sense a product of avidyā. Avidyā must exist before him. We must therefore suppose that real avidyā or mūlāvidyā resides not in the individual, but in the Absolute Spirit or Brahman.

There is another reason for this. To the individual, the world is simply given. He does not make or unmake anything. So far as he is concerned, the world that is presented to him is as real as he himself. We must therefore suppose that both the world and the individual are somehow the effect of avidyā which ultimately resides in the Absolute Spirit.

Now wherever avidyā may reside, it cannot bring forth anything or cause anything. We have already seen that it can have no being *prior to* the being of its so-called effects, or the illusory objects said to be perceived. It is therefore wrong to suppose that avidyā existed before the world and the individuals constituting the realm of the manifold, or somehow caused them to exist. There is no causality, but only misperception; and the object misperceived does not exist, and is not brought into being through any agency. All that we can say is

that the illusory, although not existing, appears to exist in erroneous perception, and that therefore when the latter is removed or is superseded by right knowledge, the appearance also ceases. The supposition that avidyā exists prior to the world including the individuals, and causes that world to exist, is thus seen to be quite untenable.

Much is made of the question as to the support of avidyā. It is argued that it cannot reside in Brahman; for then Brahman would have erroneous knowledge. This would mean either that Brahman is subject to change and modification, or that the erroneous knowledge of Brahman is as eternal as Brahman himself; in the latter case, there will be no such thing as release from error. On the other hand, if avidyā resides in the individual, the individual cannot be its object. What is misperceived cannot be itself the seat of error. The individual as individual is misperceived. It cannot exist prior to avidyā. And avidyā therefore cannot reside in it.

The question however is very simple. We have already seen that avidyā cannot be ultimately real. It has the same kind of existence which an illusory object has. There is thus no question of its really residing anywhere. The only question is, where does it appear to reside? Once we have restricted the question in this way, all complications disappear. We are in no doubt as to where it appears to reside. Whoever perceives the manifold, or distinguishes himself from Brahman, has avidyā. Shall we then say that the individual is the seat of avidyā? But the individual is not really the individual. He is truly the Absolute. There is

only one true spirit, the Absolute Spirit. It is the self of us all. It is thus both true that avidyā resides in the individual, and that it resides in Brahman. Difficulties only arise when avidyā is taken to be a real entity, and so also the difference due to it, namely the difference of the Absolute and the individual or Jīva and Brahman. When we have guarded against this error, the apparent paradox connected with the seat of avidyā disappears.

We can now understand why it is maintained that avidyā resides in Brahman. It is eternally non-existent in Brahman, and yet it can appear nowhere else to reside except in it. It is not to be understood that this appearance is eternal. It is of the very essence of an appearance that it cannot be eternal; an appearance is an appearance because it is cancelled. If there were no cancellation, there would be no distinction between appearance and reality. But it would be asked,—is not avidyā real till it is cancelled? And if it has an end in time, will it not also have a beginning?

Now we have already shown that what is once cancelled cannot be said to have existed at any time. Avidyā therefore cannot be said really to have existed before it is cancelled. Still there is a certain appearance which is cancelled; and it is quite a legitimate question to ask how long this appearance can be supposed to have thus continued till its final cancellation. Now suppose we say that it came into being at a particular moment of time; then the further question will arise, what brought it into being at that moment? Brahman could not have brought it into being; and beside Brahman nothing existed. If we assign any cause, then that cause (being different from Brahman) would be likewise illusory, and

so part of the appearance to be accounted for. Thus avidyā can have no cause beyond itself. A cause of avidyā is a self-contradiction. The very realm of causality is the realm of avidyā. Once then we have posited avidyā, we must suppose that it is uncaused, and therefore beginningless in time; it is *anādi*. Avidyā then, conceived temporally, is an appearance in Brahman that has an end in time but no beginning in it.

This realistic conception of avidyā, if it is taken literally, can easily give rise to certain difficulties. It might appear as though Brahman and avidyā existed together up to a certain point of time, and then avidyā ceased to exist leaving Brahman alone. Thus both dualism and non-dualism would be true,—dualism till the moment of cancellation and non-dualism after it. Again, the disappearance of avidyā at a particular moment of time would be inexplicable. For if the presence of Brahman was not sufficient to cancel it earlier, it would not be sufficient to cancel it at that moment. Also, it cannot be self-cancelled. The being of a thing can never turn against itself even in infinite time. Let us suppose that avidyā evolves something in time that cancels it. Now if avidyā is beginningless, processes in time have an infinite extension. In infinite time however, no possibility can remain unactualised. Nothing can come into being which has not existed before. The process will go on repeating itself endlessly. The end of the process will never come; for nothing can be produced which has not been produced before; and what has been produced before has not ended the process.

The truth is that any objective view of avidyā is beset with difficulties. Avidyā does not co-exist with

Brahman, and its end does not come in time. The end of avidyā may be said to be a timeless and eternal fact; for whatever is brought about in time is itself avidyāic.

There might be a certain difficulty with regard to the cancelling knowledge. Is it not in time? If it is not in time, then there should be no avidyā to be cancelled, and no need for argument and persuasion. But if there is this need, the knowledge is not yet. This difficulty is met by saying that this knowledge is also avidyāic, and so cancels itself. The truth however is that once we have accepted avidyā as fact, we can never get rid of it altogether. We must recognise that avidyā is no fact. It cannot exist. There is real non-dualism. It would be suicidal even to suppose that there is a real cancellation of anything; for then this cancellation at least must be an ultimate fact. The only logical position to take up is that nothing really ceases to exist, and nothing is really cancelled. There is no real process in time. This is the view of those orthodox writers who contend that the cancellation of avidyā does not fall in any of the categories known to us,—being, non-being, anirvacanīya, etc.; also it does not constitute a new category, the 'fifth' variety as it is called. The being of Brahman or the Absolute Reality is itself this cancellation. This amounts to saying that there is in fact nothing to be cancelled, and no cancellation. All that is, is one Absolute Reality, and this reality is, in literal truth, one without a second.

V

We said that the illusory object is uncaused.* This may be objected to. It imay be argued that an illusory object appears to exist; and for this appearance a reason can be assigned. There is reason, for instance, for the appearance of the illusory snake in the place of the rope:

(*a*) A real snake has originally been seen. If no real snake had been seen, the illusion would not have become possible.

(*b*) The snake has a certain resemblance to the rope. A rope, for example, can under no circumstances be taken to be a chair. There is no resemblance between a rope and a chair.

(*c*) There is, on the occasion of the appearance, some defect in respect of light or the position of the observer, etc.

(*d*) The perceiving mind is imbued with a natural fear of the snake, and quickly jumps to a wrong conclusion. All these factors combined produce the illusion of the snake.

Now it may at once be admitted that for whatever happens, some reason can always be assigned. Nothing

* The actual Vedāntic position is that the cause of an illusory appearance is avidyā, which constitutes its upādāna or material. We have however argued that avidyā cannot exist prior to the appearance, and cannot therefore constitute its cause in the ordinary sense. The present argument has reference to certain causes of erroneous perception which can be empirically determined; it has no reference to avidyā as such, which is taken to be synonymous with erroneous perception itself.

really happens without a cause. The perception of the illusory snake is supposed to happen. It must therefore have a cause. The above list of constituent factors may not be exhaustive. But it at least indicates how the perception of the illusory snake may have been caused; and since the illusory cannot exist apart from the perception of it, it cannot be said to be wholly uncaused.

The perception of the illusory snake may have been caused. But this at least is a different sort of causality from the causality admitted in ordinary perception. In the latter, what causes the perception is first and foremost the thing that is given. Everything else is subsidiary. Given the thing, we may lack the means of perceiving it. But given everything else *minus* the thing, perception is impossible. In the case under consideration, perception can only be said to be caused in a very pickwickian sense. There is really no perception at all to be accounted for.

It may now be argued that the erroneous perception cannot be said to have no real object. The illusory snake is not a non-existent snake. It can be shown to be grounded in reality. A non-existent snake can never be perceived. The error in question is to be accounted for in some other way. This brings us to the different theories of perceptual error.

(*a*) The first may be called the theory of 'no error.' We have seen a real snake some time. Later, we are confronted by an object, such as a piece of rope, which we perceive as it is, although not very distinctly. Owing to certain causes, the memory of the snake once perceived is revived; but we somehow fail to discriminate the memory of this snake from the object that

is perceived, and go on to affirm that we perceive a snake. There is no illusory snake anywhere to be accounted for. The only snake that we know is the snake which we have once perceived and now remember; that snake is not illusory.

This view however is not tenable. If we perceive as it is what is given to us, and remember what we have once perceived, there is no reason why we should not be able to distinguish the two facts. But we never distinguish. Even when the illusion is cancelled, we do not say that 'now we perceive the rope and remember the particular snake,' but that 'that snake' which we appeared to perceive is non-existent. A snake in place of the rope, a snake which we call illusory, is thus clearly indicated. This snake is not the one which we have once seen and now remember. It is a new snake altogether not accounted for by anything in reality.

(*b*) Then there is the theory which may be called the theory of mistaking one real thing for another real thing. According to this theory, there is indeed error of perception. But it consists in mistaking one thing for another. The snake which we misperceive in the place of the rope is not what is called an illusory snake, or a snake which is non-existent. It is a real snake which we have perceived somewhere. Only we fail to become conscious of its spatial and temporal determinations and seem to think that it is given to us here and now. It is this real snake which we have once perceived that we wrongly perceive to be where the rope is. There is no such thing as an illusory snake.

It is here admitted that the snake which we perceive in the place of the the rope has very different spatial and

temporal relations from any other snake which we have ever perceived. It confronts us here and now unlike any of them. What ground then have we for saying that it is one of those snakes which we have perceived before? Very probably we have perceived several snakes, each distinct from every other. How are we to determine which of these snakes is the snake that appears to us in the place of the rope? Again, the snake which we now seem to perceive is perceived to be 'this snake,' and so distinct from every other snake. It is not perceived to be 'that snake,' or a snake which was perceived by us at some other time and in some other place; it is not a snake of memory. *This snake* then is unlike any of the snakes seen before; it is a new snake altogether, which is in no way accounted for by those other snakes. If, for example, we see one real snake, and after some time and in some other place see another real snake, we do not say that the latter is the former, unless we recognise some mark of resemblance and thereby proceed consciously to affirm their identity. The same is the case here. Those other snakes are all snakes of memory. *This snake*, for whatever reality it appears to have, can only be compared to an actual object of perception, which is quite distinct in itself, and which cannot be confounded with what is only remembered but not perceived. The snake then which appears in the place of the rope is a new snake, which is at the same time a non-existent snake.

(c) There is thirdly the theory of subjectivity of the illusory object. The snake in the place of the rope is not to be traced to anything that is really objective to us. It is a snake which exists in the mind. This

mental snake is wrongly taken to be a snake outside the mind. According to this view, the illusion consists not in perceiving a real rope to be a snake,—the so-called real rope is itself mental,—but in taking a snake that exists only in the mind to be a snake that is outside the mind.

Now it is evident that we distinguish things that are in the mind from things that are not in the mind. It may be that the latter are ultimately not independent of the spirit. But this is very different from saying that the distinction between the two kinds of things is not valid as far as it goes. If then it is valid, the snake which we see in the place of the rope, and which has the character of 'this-ness,' cannot be a snake in the mind. A snake in the mind does not require to be perceived through the senses. The illusory snake however does appear to be so perceived. When therefore the illusion is dissolved, we do not say that *this snake* was really in the mind, but that this snake did not exist where it appeared to exist. In other words, this snake was not this snake; it was an illusory snake. We thus find, once again, that the illusory cannot be traced to anything real, whether mental or non-mental. It stands by itself as a content which is wholly unaccountable by anything in the nature of the things themselves.

The illusory is distinct from the real and also from the unreal. It is truly said to be 'indescribable' in terms of either being or of non-being. It is *anirvacanīya*. We have already studied the true significance of such an entity. Here we may conclude that the illusory is not caused, and it is not connected with any real entity.

We have before argued that the perception of the illusory is itself illusory. If that be true, then the perception too cannot be caused. It is however a deep-rooted idea in some people that the perception of the illusory is caused by certain factors some of which we indicated at the beginning of this section. We shall therefore try to analyse this view a little further.

Is our normal perception of a thing, which is not later cancelled, caused? Let us suppose that it is caused. It is produced through the co-operation of certain factors. The thing must be actually presented to us. Our senses must be in contact with the thing. There must be no defect in the senses. The mind must follow the senses and attend to the object. The external circumstances, such as light, etc., must be favourable to perception. If these factors are present, the perception of the object, we might say, follows of a necessity. If, on the other hand, there is the absence of any factor, or a defect in any of them, that will have a corresponding effect on the perception. But it is evident that all the factors, except the thing itself, merely help or hinder perception. They can never create an object which is not there already. If they could create an object, knowledge would lose all objective reference, and there would be no means of distinguishing right knowledge from wrong knowledge. But if that is so, perception of the thing which does not exist and is not presented to us cannot be *accounted for* by any combination of factors which does not include the actual presentation of the thing that is supposed to be perceived.*

* It is commonly thought that the cause of erroneous perception is some defect or *doṣa*. But since none of the empirical defects by them-

It might here be said that our conclusion goes too far and is not warranted. There can be such a thing as misrepresentation by the senses which may amount to the perception of a thing which is not. In normal perception, all the circumstances of perception are also normal. They only help us to know the thing as it is. In perception which is not *quite* normal, there might be a certain defect in some factor of perception, which while not altogether misrepresenting the thing to us may not give us very exact knowledge about it. In definitely abnormal perception, the defect may go so far as positively to misrepresent the thing to us, and thereby cause a false perception or the perception of a thing which is not real and is not presented. This abnormality may be so much pronounced in certain cases, that there is no question of any misrepresentation of an existing object, but the actual creation of a wholly new object. In a fevered state of the imagination, objects are seen which imitate the reality of the objects of conscious and waking life. We thus find that the perception of the illusory

selves lead to erroneous perception, avidyā itself is said to be the real *doṣa* or the ultimate cause. We have however seen that avidyā cannot be distinguished from erroneous perception, and assigned as its cause. We do not in fact explain anything by postulating such a connection between the two. The latter is essentially uncaused. It does not help us very much here to distinguish causation through actual change of substance or *pariṇāma*, and causation through erroneous superimposition or *vivarta*. Avidyā is said to be the cause of erroneous perception in the former sense. But this is just what is wholly meaningless; for however far we may go in the analysis of avidyā, it will remain significant to us only as erroneous perception, and not as something distinct from the latter and constituting its material cause. All we can distinguish is a wider sphere of error and a smaller one, and not something distinct from error that can cause error.

can be caused by certain factors which are not themselves illusory but belong to reality itself.

This argument appears very plausible. But the very reasons which are considered sufficient to account for the appearance of the not-real to be real, are also the reasons which can be used to show that the real itself is not-real. For after all, we never know a thing except under certain conditions. We never know a thing as it is in itself. What reason then is there against the supposition that even in the so-called normal perception, our perception has no relation to any possible existence of the thing (which we never know), but that it creates its own object? It is admitted by all that the structure of our senses, their power, the position of the observer, etc., are all determining factors in a perception. Can any one distinguish their contribution from the contribution of the thing? If we can never know how a thing would appear in itself unaffected and undetermined by any factors extraneous to it, we can also never prove that the thing exists at all or that it has any contribution to make to the perception of it. The term 'normal perception' has no metaphysical significance. All perception can be shown to be equally normal or equally abnormal, so long as it gives rise, with equal subjective authority, to a belief in objective reality.

It might here be argued: But there is no reason why the object of what we call normal perception may not be in itself what it appears to us to be. We cannot indeed prove that. A proof, in the very nature of the case, is not possible. As we can never isolate an object from our knowledge and yet know what it is, so neither can we prove demonstratively that it is in itself what

we perceive it to be. Still our faith may be quite justified. At least there is no reason why we should give it up.

Now we may ourselves indeed not be able to show, on the evidence of perception itself, that the thing is not as it is perceived to be by us. Still it is difficult to entertain the faith in view of certain facts pertaining to perception. We may, for example, try in a particular case to determine the set of conditions under which we may be said to apprehend the thing as it is. We shall soon find that no such conditions exist. We can evidently only determine this set of conditions by reference to our perception of the thing. But one perception of the thing may be in itself quite as clear, definite, and convincing as any other. We may set a special truth-value upon a particular perception. But, by only a slight variation in the conditions, we shall find that the dividing line between the two perceptions is so thin that our own valuation cannot but appear to us as very arbitrary. And when all is said, there is the ineradicable doubt. We strain our senses, and seem to apprehend better. We take one position, and then another. We want more light, and greater variation in the circumstances that govern our perception. We are never satisfied. We still remain in uncertainty and doubt. We seem to see things only dimly, and as through darkness and in error. There can be in the very nature of the case, no perfect set of conditions which will resolve all our doubts. Can we still maintain our faith in the face of these inevitable doubts?

It might be said that the very fact that we strain our senses and try to improve the conditions of percep-

tion proves that the thing has a certain character that might be known by us. We may not be ultimately satisfied with our knowledge. But this does not mean that we have any doubt that the thing has some character which it really possesses, and that our knowledge more or less approximates to the real nature of the thing. It will be seen however that even this belief is not free from doubt. If the thing really has a character that is approximately the character that we apprehend in sensible perception, then that character cannot be independent of all those conditions which determine our perception of the thing. But a character cannot be said really to belong to a thing when it is in any way determined by what is extraneous to the intrinsic nature of the thing itself. No sensible character can, in this sense, be said to be intrinsic to the thing; our doubt extends to the whole sensible nature of the latter.

Our conclusion is that once we try to account for the perception of the illusory by a certain defect in what may be called the machinery of preception, we shall really have to set aside the whole distinction of right perception and wrong perception; for there is no perception which can be said to be true to the thing as it is in itself. In fact, the thing as it is in itself has to be totally abolished. In its place we have objects that have neither independence nor self-existence. Thus by trying to account for false perception by certain factors that are in the nature of the real, we have abolished the problem itself; for there is no erroneous perception as against right perception to be explained. The only right knowledge will be knowledge that is obtained through any agency that is incorruptible, and not liable to change or defect. The

senses are not such an agency. The whole realm of the sensible must therefore be rejected as non-existent in itself. The only real thing is the thing that is self-known, and not dependent upon any outside agency for the knowledge of it. This is the *ātman*.

VI

It might be argued here that all the difficulties arise because we have created an unnecessary dualism between the thing and our knowledge of the thing. Our senses may be said to be never in error. What we perceive through them is just as it is perceived to be. This something that is perceived may simply be called a sense-datum : and a sense-datum has no character other than that which it is perceived to have. What we call an error of perception is really an error that is due to a wrong judgment on the sense-data that are actually presented.

Now it is evident that sense-data can never have other sense-data as their qualities. Each sense-datum is a complete datum by itself. Any judgment then which we may pass on certain sense-data that are actually given can never err in attributing to those sense-data qualities which they do not in fact possess. The error can only consist in associating with those sense-data other sense-data which are not themselves at the time given. But once again this can only be an error when we have means at our disposal for determining with certainty what those other sense-data are or what they are not. Have we any such means? The only means

that we can think of is either some change in our relation to the group of sense-data under consideration enabling us to intuit directly those sense-data which we did not intuit before, or the evidence of some other mind which is more favourably situated in respect of them. But neither of these testimonies will be relevant to the case in point. For we have already seen that it is not *the same sense-datum* that is seen from different places, or under different conditions of perception. When therefore I change my position, or rely on the evidence of some other man differently situated, I am not validly determining the nature of those sense-data which I originally inferred. I am in fact dealing with different sense-data altogether. These might give rise to new judgments, but they can never test our original judgment. This latter can only be tested by the evidence there and then available without varying the conditions. We conclude that if there is no error in actual perception, neither can there be any error of *judgment* with regard to the object of such perception. There will be no error at all.

It might be thought that we are straining the argument too much. Judgment based on the evidence of one sense can be corrected or tested by the evidence of other senses. We may, for example, suppose that certain visual images that are actually presented to us are accompanied by certain tactual images, etc., and that the whole group of images taken together constitutes an object x. But our sense of touch or of taste may falsify this judgment by showing that those other images were in reality different from the images that were judged by us to have been associated, and that therefore the group in question constituted the object y and not the object x.

We have thus a complete explanation of what is ordinarily called an erroneous perception, but which is in reality an erroneous judgment.

This argument would be plausible if it were proved that sense-data constitute certain real objective groups. But we have already shown that a sense-datum, taken apart from the sensation of it, can have no sensible quality, and cannot be significantly spoken of as a sense-datum at all. There is then no question of any real objective group which is judged rightly or wrongly. All that we can argue is that our expectation is either realised or frustrated. When we see, for example, a certain visual sense-datum, we expect, associated with it, certain tactual and other sense-data. This expectation is based merely on certain subjective associations, and not on anything in the nature of the things themselves, which conception is found to be quite meaningless. There is no question then of any truth or error in our knowledge properly so called. We may indeed mean by truth "an expectation realised", and by error "an expectation frustrated". But evidently such extended use of these terms is quite opposed to their original significance, in which a reference to something objective is necessarily implied.

Our account of sense-data however may not find general acceptance. It might be insisted on that there is a certain objective necessity in what we perceive. The sense-data are objectively real. But even if we accept this view, the above account of error cannot be valid. For if the sense-data are extra-mental, then they must have an intrinsic nature not determined by the perception of them. This intrinsic nature can only be known in

one particular perception. All other perceptions of it will be erroneous perceptions. It is unreasonable to argue that an entity which is objective and independent of the perception of it cannot be differently and so erroneously perceived. There will thus be error in the perception of sense-data, and not merely in a judgment about them.

It can indeed be disputed whether there is such a thing as pure perception which does not involve any judgment. But however we may decide this issue, we shall have to admit that there is an intuitive experience that must be regarded as essentially perceptual as distinct from a purely judgmental form of knowledge. If that is so, then there can be error peculiar to perception as there can be error in judgment. McTaggart goes so far as to hold that every judgment is really a perception. If this were true, every erroneous judgment would be in reality an erroneous perception. The reverse position, namely that every perception is a judgment, is more difficult to maintain. For what are we to judge if nothing is *given* to start with?—and if something is given, then that at least is perceived and not judged. We may not indeed be able historically to go back to a point where pure perception is supposed to take place. But logically there must be something that is directly intuited if judgment itself is to become possible. The only alternative to the denial of all direct intuition would be the denial of all knowledge of objective reality. But if direct intuition is admitted, the possibility of erroneous perception necessarily follows.

Here it might be argued that there can be no such thing as erroneous perception. For a thing is either perceived as it is, or it is not perceived at all. What are we

to understand by the so-called erroneous perception of it? It cannot be the perception of the thing; and what is not the perception of the thing may be perception of some other thing, or no perception at all; it cannot be what is called the erroneous perception of the thing. The very conception of the latter involves self-contradiction; we speak of the perception of the thing, and at the same time go on to affirm that it is not the perception of it as it is,—or in other words, that it is the perception of no thing. To conclude, a perception of a thing must be a true perception, or it is no perception at all. It is also accordingly meaningless to speak of one perception being corrected by another perception. A perception is nothing if it is not already a true perception; a corrected perception is no perception.

The only flaw of this argument is its mis-direction. We are not concerned to show that there is real erroneous perception. Rather it is fundamental to our argument that an erroneous perception, like its object that is illusory, does not exist at all. The above argument brings this out quite simply, and directly. Whenever a supposed perception is corrected by a later perception, the only proper conclusion to draw is that it was not the perception of that thing, and that therefore the so-called perception was no perception. The only perception that is real is the perception of a thing that is real. At the same time, it is from this experience of correction that we, by analysis, reach this result. It would be sheer dogmatism to suppose that there should be no experience of correction. The experience in question does not go counter to, or contradict, the conclusion reached. But if there is this experience, we cannot eliminate from speech

all reference to erroneous perception, which is yet no perception. We still speak of the illusory snake, although an illusory snake is no snake. The same may be said of its perception.

It might here be said that the very conception of one perception being corrected by another implies the reality of the distinction between a right perception and a wrong perception. But is this distinction tenable? If, as we have previously argued, there is nothing that is really independent of our perception of it, then there can be nothing that has the relation of correspondence to the latter. It would therefore be wrong to define a right perception as perception of what is, and an erroneous perception as perception of what is not. Every perception is what it is *prima facie* taken to be. It has no implications which can falsify it or prove it to have been erroneous. The distinction is abolished, and the experience of correction can only be called illusory.

Now it is indeed true that on the hypothesis in question the distinction is not tenable. Still it would be wrong to conclude from this that every perception is right perception. There is simply no perception in the sense in which we ordinarily understand it. With the abolition of the distinction between right knowledge and wrong knowledge, knowledge as such is itself abolished. We thus find that we are nearer to our final point of view if we abolish the distinction in question, and with it all knowledge of objectivity. There are no real objects; and there can therefore be no real knowledge of objects. What appears to be such knowledge is in reality, and apart from the apparent divisions introduced in it by non-existent things, the one pure and objectless consciousness.

VII

We have analysed erroneous knowledge, or *ajñāna*. We have seen that there can be no explanation of it. It is itself the ultimate explanation of the world-appearance as well as of itself. The illusory is inexplicable; and because it is self-contradictory, it presents no real problem to thought. The term "ajñāna" however is capable of another interpretation, namely simple ignorance or non-knowledge. This ignorance, it is evident, is implied in all erroneous knowledge. It is because we do not know the real that it becomes possible to misperceive it. There are certain problems peculiar to ajñāna in this particular sense. We shall now proceed to consider them.

It cannot be denied that we have ignorance, and also that we are aware of it. The following instances make this clear: (*a*) We say, "I do not know the meaning of this word, or what was intended to be conveyed by a certain utterance, or what you said, etc.;" (*b*) "I do not know the content of the infinite universe"; (*c*) "I did not know anything in sleep;" (*d*) "I am ignorant." In all these cases, it is evident, there is awareness on my part of being ignorant. This ignorance again is not without some object. Sometimes indeed I may not be fully conscious of the object of my ignorance as when I simply say, "I am ignorant." But my awareness of my own ignorance is determinate only as the object of my ignorance is determinate. In this particular instance, there are certain objects supplied by thought; only they are somewhat indefinite in character.

The question naturally arises: Is there not self-contradiction involved here? If my awareness of ignor-

ance includes the awareness of the object of ignorance, then so far I know the object and I am not ignorant. We can always ask the question,—ignorant of what? The extent to which we are able to define this *what*, we cannot be said to have any ignorance. Where we fail, we also fail to be aware of being ignorant of anything, and cannot legitimately be spoken of as being ignorant. Is it not a self-contradiction to say that we know our own ignorance? What we know, we absolutely know; what we do not know, we absolutely do not know, and cannot even be aware that there is something which we do not know. The proposition that we are aware of being ignorant of x really means that we know x and at the same time we do not know x.

It will here be argued that our consciousness of ignorance cannot be denied. It is an undoubted fact. This fact can also be made intelligible. Our knowledge of x is to be distinguished from our ignorance of x. When I say I do not know x, I know x only in its generality. I do not know its particular character. Let us take the example, " I do not know what is in your mind ". Here I know that there is something in your mind; my ignorance relates to this something. But I do not know what this something is in its concrete nature. Thus my knowledge and my ignorance, in respect of one and the same entity, can be compatible.

This reasoning however is not convincing. It rather brings out the more emphatically that our knowledge and our ignorance cannot cover exactly the same ground, and cannot refer to an identical content. There is no ignorance in respect of that which we know, namely,

the general character,—and no knowledge in respect of that which we do not know, namely the specific character. Knowledge and ignorance are thus mutually exclusive. They cannot relate to an identical thing which can then be spoken of both as known and as not known.

It will here be said that both knowledge and ignorance of an identical content are possible. In fact it is only because they are possible, that there is consciousness of ignorance. If they related to different things, or even to the different aspects of the same thing, we should have no consciousness of ignorance. We readily recognise that the absence of sound is not the same absence as the absence of colour. Each absence is determined by its specific object. Even so here. Ignorance of one object cannot be the same as ignorance of another object. Each ignorance is specific; and it is specific because its object is specific. Ignorance that is not specific, and is not determined by any object, can never be known as ignorance. It is as unthinkable as *mere absence* which is not the absence of anything.

The question remains, how ignorance and knowledge are compatible with regard to the same content. This question is solved in the following manner. The same content may be known differently. Thus, there might be knowledge of it in one sense, and no knowledge of it in another; it might be known, and yet at the same time not known. There is knowledge of things which is independent of the senses and the mental modifications through which sensible perception takes place; it is independent of *vṛtti-jñāna*. It may be said to know *all* things *always*. It is both unaided and unimpeded by any instruments of knowledge. It is not

produced, and it does not disappear by the disappearance of any so-called aids to knowledge. There can be no room for ignorance here. In fact, it is by the acceptance of this knowledge that our own ignorance becomes manifest to us. This knowledge therefore, not incompatible with ignorance. Rather it proves the fact-hood of ignorance. If there were no such all-knowing knowledge, we could never be aware of being ignorant of *this, that,* and so many other things which constitute almost an endless and infinite content. What ignorance is really incompatible with is that knowledge which we obtain through the senses and the connected factors of the mind, which together constitute the instruments of all empirical knowledge. So far as this knowledge is concerned, there is real absence of it when we are conscious of ignorance; for when it comes, ignorance cannot stay, and is bound to disappear even as darkness disappears before light. When therefore we say that we do not know what is going on in a distant star, we do not indeed know sensibly what is going on there; if we knew that, we should not be ignorant. Still there is undeniable awareness of the object of this ignorance. We may be said first to know this object as unknown; when empirical knowledge arises, we know the same thing as known. There is no question of the absolute ignorance of anything. Everything is known either as unknown or as known. It is a change within knowledge, and not from no-knowledge to knowledge. The object of ignorance then is not known empirically; and yet it cannot be said to be not known at all. Our difficulties vanish when we have postulated this transcendental awareness which

lights up both knowledge and ignorance. It may be called *sākṣi-jñāna*.

Now it cannot be doubted that this is as good an analysis as can be given of the fact of ignorance. Still we maintain that the fact is a self-contradictory fact, and that whatever analysis we might give of it will only make this self-contradiction the more evident. We are told that there are two kinds of knowledge, one compatible with ignorance, the other not. The question naturally arises: If the two kinds of knowledge refer to one and the same object, wherein can they be said to differ? There are only two possible ways in which the difference can be conceived: (*a*) Each kind of knowledge has a certain quality inherent in *it;* (*b*) there is a certain peculiarity in their respective objects.

We take the first alternative. It is possible in a way that the same object may be known through different kinds of knowledge. We may, for example, know a table to be round through visual perception or through the sensations of touch. We thus know the same object differently through different sensations, each of which has a certain quality of its own. But is it strictly true that the same content or the same sensum is what is known through these different modes of knowing? It is evident that there is absolutely nothing in common between the visual sensum and the tactual sensum. The roundness as felt by the touch is not the same thing as the roundness that is seen by the eye. It is only the association in experience of the two kinds of knowledge that gives us the impression that what is sensed in the two cases is the same thing. But if this is the case with different forms of sensible experience,

the gulf which divides the sensible experience of a thing from the supposed non-sensible experience of it will be found even more difficult to bridge. In the end, either the sensible thing must disappear, or the non-sensible knowledge of it.

It may indeed be taken as undeniable that we are conscious of the limitation of our knowledge, or what is the same thing conscious of being ignorant. But if we are conscious of being ignorant, we should be able to bring out very clearly to ourselves all that we actually know, and the limits of that knowledge. Can any-one however really succeed in determining the limits of his knowledge, once he has started from some knowledge? We might say to ourselves, "thus far we know,—and no farther." But if our knowledge were confined within the limit thus apprehended, there could possibly be no consciousness of something being beyond the limit, and no consciousness of the limit as such. In our very consciousness of the limit therefore, the consciousness goes beyond the limit. How can we set any limit to our actual knowledge? Is not our consciousness of ignorance illusory?

We might say to ourselves, "This is what we know, and that is what we do not know." But clearly in "not knowing that," we have defined *that* in our knowledge. We may change the argument and say, "We know *that* in a way; but we do not know it in some specified way." But in specifying the way, we have specified its object. Let us suppose that our present knowledge is of the form " that something has a character which can only be known in a particular mode of knowledge." Then our ignorance relates to

the *determinate form* which it has in that knowledge. We see a star. We know that it has a visual character other than that which we see from this distance. We are ignorant of this character which can only be known to an observer more conveniently situated. But the star as we see from this distance, and the visual character of which we are said to be ignorant,—what have they in common? Can we speak of them as the same thing? Is it really the same thing that we now know and are also ignorant about? There can really be nothing in common between that which we have not yet known empirically, and that which we actually know and talk about *now*. The more we try to define what is common to them, the more does the unknown become the known, till nothing is left to which our ignorance can properly be said to relate. If something is left over, then that something is not what we can legitimately talk about. It is nothing to us. We can never be aware of being ignorant of *it*. We thus find that the more we try to analyse ignorance and bring it to clearer consciousness, the more does it recede from us and elude knowledge. It vanishes the moment we look at it and scrutinise it.

Are we then really ignorant? We complacently admit it to be fact. We seem to be ignorant of so many things. Our knowledge is so very little. But that light of knowledge which lights up this supposed fact is a light that brooks no ignorance; it dissipates it. Our knowledge is all-inclusive and all-knowing; only we do not know it through want of discrimination. It is this want of discrimination that accounts for the apparent reality of ignorance. Our very awareness of

ignorance is an indication of our real all-knowingness, and the unreality of the fact of ignorance.

Our all-knowingness is not to be understood in terms of any content. So far as content is concerned, it is bound to be limited; and so our ignorance will be as real as our knowledge. Our all-knowingness is rather *our conscious being* which is not restricted to any content, but goes beyond all content. Our very absence of knowledge or ignorance is known by it. What can set a limit to it? That consciousness is bound to be unlimited and infinite. If we want a more readily intelligible image of our all-knowingness, we can only indicate it negatively: What we know, we know; what we do not know, we can never specify; and without such specification, there can be no real ignorance. We are all-knowing, because we are that consciousness that transcends both knowledge and ignorance, and because there is nothing of which we can be ignorant that is not lighted up by it, rendering ignorance thereby a self-contradictory concept.

It may be argued that in all our knowledge there is implied the category of the indeterminate. What we know has a necessary implication in it of something else that we do not know. We know one side of a thing, but we do not know its interior or its back side. We know a thing by certain qualities and relations. But the thing is beyond them. This something we do not know. What we actually know is not all that we are aware of. We are also aware of the realm of the indeterminate that extends beyond it. In other words, in our very awareness of knowing something, there is

awareness of not-knowing or ignorance. The fact-hood of this ignorance is thus fully vindicated.

Now we have not denied that our knowledge is limited, and that we are aware of the fact. What we have denied is that ignorance can be shown to be a fact that does not involve any self-contradiction. We may for example admit that in all our knowledge we are aware of the indeterminate, something which we can not deny but which we also cannot be said to know. But what is this indeterminate? Is it known or not? If it is known, then it is to that extent determinate. If it is not known, then it is nothing at all. The fact is that there can be no knowledge of the indeterminate as indeterminate; such knowledge would be self-contradictory; and yet without it, the reality of the indeterminate is not proved. The only significant use of the indeterminate is as in concept distinct from the determinate; but as such a concept, it cannot be said to be indeterminate.

We can indeed reverse the argument. We may put ourselves the question: What exactly is the determinate content that we know in any particular case? What we seem to know is *not exactly determinate.* Something that we seem to know is overshadowed by doubt; it may be this something or that something. Something else is found to evaporate into certain relations without leaving any residue that may be fixed by thought. Our very concepts, derived as they are from experience, appear to be essentially fluid in form. Thought itself may not be sure of its meanings. We can thus quite well argue that our knowledge has no determinateness about it. We really know nothing. We are wrapped up in

eternal ignorance. What we suppose to be knowledge is mere ignorance. This argument is quite as valid as that which we advanced to prove the unreality of ignorance. Thus both our supposed knowledge and our supposed ignorance are not what they appear. Neither is ignorance ignorance, nor is knowledge knowledge. We seem to have both, and yet in reality have neither. We are that eternal unbedimmed light which neither knows, nor is it ignorant. These are mere appearances, self-contradictory in character, that appear in it; and we wrongly go on to affirm that we know and that we are ignorant.

VIII

It will now be argued that the instances of ignorance on which we have based our analysis are not adequate to give us an idea of real ignorance, and that therefore our analysis of the concept is not valid. We have been considering only those cases in which a direct reference to some object is necessarily involved,—I am ignorant of *x*, *y* etc. Here perhaps it is not difficult to show an inner contradiction. But there is a condition of being, with which we are quite familiar, in which there is undoubted ignorance, but no reference to any object whatsoever. In the state of deep and sound slumber, there is complete ignorance; there is no reference to any specific object of which we may be said to be ignorant. Can we not maintain that the fact of this ignorance involves no self-contradiction, and may therefore be taken to be real?

Now it is evident that there is no direct awareness of this ignorance in sleep itself. If anyone had this awareness, he would not later affirm, as he does when he wakes up, that he *did not know anything* in sleep. We seem to have this awareness only when we wake up. But then reference to certain objects more or less indefinite in character is clearly involved; in the expression 'we did not know anything in sleep,' 'anything' stands for a number of things of conscious waking experience which are supplied by thought in order to make the expression significant. All our consciousness of ignorance then has this objective reference, and no new case appears to be presented by the ignorance that is said to exist in sleep.

The matter however is not so very simple, it will be said. The awareness which we have on waking up refers to some past fact, the ignorance that has already ended. It is clearly of the form of memory. We must therefore postulate an original and direct experience of ignorance in sleep; and since no reference to any specific object can here be involved, the fact of ignorance involves no self-contradiction, and may be said to be so far real.

It is indeed true that our present awareness appears to refer to some past fact. But is it really a case of memory? Whenever we have memory, we are also aware of the time and the place of the original experience. Sometimes we may not be able to make this spatial and temporal reference definite. But we have no doubt that the original experience took place at some time and at some place which are only capable of an approximate determination. In the case before us, no such thing is possible. We are asserting the absence of all experience

in sleep; and as a matter of fact, we cannot carry back our so-called memory to any original experience. Is it a genuine case of memory at all?

It might here be argued that we have wrongly defined memory. All that is necessary in order to have memory is that our present experience must refer to some direct experience in the past. It is not necessary that there should be any explicit reference to the time and the place and the general circumstances of the original experience. It is sufficient if we can prove that there is an original experience in sleep to which our present memory refers. This can be proved in the following way.

Sleep is not a present fact when we wake up. It cannot therefore be directly intuited. Also it is not inferred. The ground of any possible inference may be stated as follows: By the evidence of the clock we determine that a certain period has elapsed. As there is absence of memory with regard to the content of this period, there must be absence of all experience. We know in this way that a certain period has elapsed which was not filled with any experience; and this we call sleep. Now it is evident that we do not consult a clock every morning in order to know that we slept. If all the clocks were broken, we should still be aware that we slept. But how are we to avail ourselves of the services of the clock even? If our memory can be carried back only up to a certain point of time, namely the waking moment,—then beyond that point we should have no memory whatsoever, and even the clock cannot be availed of to indicate a definite lapse of time beginning at a particular moment in the past. But let us suppose

that the threads of memory are again taken up at a point of time earlier in the series. Then the interval is either itself remembered, or it is not. If it is remembered, then there must have been an original experience regarding it. If it is not remembered, then the whole course of memory should appear *to us* to be continuous, and we should not be aware of any interval of time between any two memories. There must be an experienced break, before the services of the clock can be availed of. How is the reality of this break to be established through inference? In fact any inferential process to become possible, the interval in question must be given to start with. For what is the supposed absence of memory to refer to? If there is no *given* period to which the absence of memory can be referred, the very first condition of a possible inference is not satisfied. Lastly, it is evident that it would be fallacious to infer from the absence of memory the absence of all original experience. For memories are often forgotten even when there has been original experience. If there is memory, then there must certainly be an original experience; but the reverse is not true. We conclude that inference cannot be the ground of our present knowledge of sleep. The only remaining form of knowledge that is possible under the circumstances is memory. There must therefore be an original experience in sleep to make memory possible.

An objection will be raised here. The self of waking life or the empirical ego is not present in sleep. It cannot be present in the very nature of the case. For if it were present and experienced anything, the awareness that we did not know anything in sleep would be falsified. How can we then explain the possi-

bility of an original experience in sleep? This difficulty is met by arguing that the ego is not our true self, and that it is not a necessary element in all experience. It is found to be absent in sleep, and yet there is knowledge of this very absence. There must therefore be a consciousness which is beyond the ego-consciousness, and which makes the absence of the ego itself its object. It is indeed not to be understood that in sleep itself the absence of the ego or of anything else is known as the absence of that particular thing. To know the absence of a particular thing, we must also know the thing; and this will be to re-introduce the ego-consciousness. What is meant is that there is in sleep a consciousness which is beyond the ego, and which even illuminates the absence of all knowledge by the ego. But at the same time, it only knows what is actually present at the time. And what is present is not the absence of this or that particular entity, in which we resolve the situation on waking up, but what may be called universal ignorance, or pure ignorance, that is positive in character. This is not known through any mental modification; for that would be to resuscitate the ego in some form and the machinery of empirical knowledge connected with it. If we must have some modification, it must be a modification of ignorance itself. It is in this way proved that there can be experience of pure ignorance which does not in any way contradict itself.

How far this view is correct we shall now proceed to examine. There might be an initial difficulty in understanding how memory is possible even if the above view is taken to be substantially true. For one consciousness does not remember an experience on the part

of another consciousness. The consciousness in sleep is superior to the ego. It has the original experience. But how is it that quite a distinct entity, namely the waking ego, has the memory. It knows that it slept, and that it did not know anything. It is just as well to say that one man sleeps, while another has the awareness that he slept. This difficulty however is not real. The consciousness in sleep which knows ignorance may be said to be our only real consciousness. It never ceases to be conscious when we wake up. It is perfectly continuous with itself and uninterrupted. What happens when we wake up is simply that this consciousness appears to itself in the form of the ego. The ego which was absent in sleep has so to say come to life and established an identity with the consciousness in question. It is this consciousness that knows all the while, whether we are in sleep or in wakefulness. Even when the ego seems to know or to remember, it is not really the ego that is conscious. The ego as such is more properly regarded as something unintelligent. It is known while it is there; and when it ceases to exist in sleep, its absence also is known. That consciousness however which knows the ego itself, as well as its absence, can never be known. That is the real intelligent self. The only point therefore that seems to require an explanation is how memory can arise unless there is an original impression made on the mind and retained by it in the form of a memory-trace. The mind does not function in sleep, and so it cannot receive any impression; and without it, there can be no memory. To get over this difficulty, it is suggested that the mind receives the impression just when it comes to life on

waking up, and that it can thereafter revive it at will. Its coming to life is synchronous with the creation of the memory-trace in question. This is however a minor point and can be satisfactorily settled, if once we have proved that the case under consideration is a genuine case of memory.

More important than the above is the question as to the exact nature of the original experience. Whenever we think of any experience, we always think of it as having some definite content. The content here is mere ignorance which is said to be positive in character. It is to be distinguished from 'absence of knowledge.' To know the absence of knowledge of anything, we must know the thing. This is not possible in sleep. It is indeed argued that wherever this positive ignorance exists, absence of knowledge also exists. This explains the statement which we make on waking up that we did not know anything in sleep. Absence of knowledge in sleep is indeed a fact. But this absence itself is not known. What is known in sleep is positive ignorance.

It is however evident that the distinction here made is a distinction without a difference; positive ignorance is presentable to us only in the form of 'absence of knowledge'; we have no idea of any other content which can be said to be represented by it. The ignorance which we seem to find in the state of sleep is only intelligible to us under this negative image, namely the absence of knowledge of things. Apart from this, it may be anything, but it is not something that can be presented to thought or conceived as presentable to any knowledge. We lightly say that we were completely ignorant in sleep, as ignorant as a piece of stone or a

block of wood. We forget that the state of these unintelligent entities is itself conceived on the analogy of our own experience of deep sleep, and that if we did not find in the latter the absence of all that intelligent activity which we identify with intelligent existence, there would be no reason whatsoever to distinguish our existence as intelligent from the existence of a piece of stone or a block of wood. It is the absence of intelligent activity that alone gives the unintelligent its meaning. There is no other way in which we can represent to ourselves a state of unintelligent being or of mere ignorance, such as sleep.

It is argued that we must conceive positive ignorance on the analogy of darkness. Darkness is not merely the privation of light. We see darkness. We cannot see mere privation. Darkness is therefore something in itself and positive in character. But firstly, why should we require eyes in order to see darkness? A creature who had never developed this particular sense even in its most rudimentary form should be able to see darkness. Nobody however can hold that this is possible. But if eyes are needed in order to see darkness, then we have not eliminated from the latter what alone can stimulate the eyes, namely light. Secondly, can we really find in darknes some positive entity that is related to light as one thing is related to another thing? In mythology indeed we may find the demons of darkness putting up a fight with the angels of light before retreating into the back-ground, but this would satisfy neither common-sense nor philosophical thought. It is not some positive stuff which fills space, and which is somehow driven out when light is brought in. Thirdly,

can we really be said to see darkness? Darkness as such has no shape, form, colour, or any kind of determinate reality. It is therefore more true to fact to say that when we do not see anything in particular and still want to see, we are said to see darkness. There is no image of darkness as such. What we consider to be such an image will be found on analysis to be certain streaks of light or spots, more or less definite in character, which come up and then disappear. Of darkness as such we cannot be said to have any image.

We may, however, for the sake of the argument, suppose that there is such a thing as positive ignorance in sleep. Evidently, since it is some definite content in itself, distinct from the knowing consciousness, it can only be known by the latter as object. But if that is so, the subject-object relation exists even during sleep. How can we really be said not to know anything in sleep? A way out of this difficulty is found by arguing that although ignorance is object, it is a different kind of object from the objects of waking life. The latter are known through some mental modification, or *vṛtti* of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. Ignorance is not thus known. We can therefore say, in a general way, on waking up that nothing was known. A similar distinction is to be made in respect of the subject. The ego is a subject, so also is the consciousness that knows ignorance in sleep. But while ego is pure consciousness with the limitation of the mind and its adjuncts or *antaḥkaraṇa*, the consciousness that knows ignorance is pure consciousness limited only by ignorance. Thus ignorance is known as object, and yet from the point of view of the waking ego which knows only through a mental modification, it is no object.

The ego can thus declare that in sleep nothing was known. Similarly, the consciousness that knows ignorance is subject, and yet from the point of view of the ego, it is no subject. Thus subject-object relation is possible in sleep without such a position being contradicted by the utterances of waking life.

This explanation is very ingenious. But what is quite certain is that ignorance to be *object* must be distinguishable from the subject, and also from some other object or objects. This evidently is not possible during sleep. There is no other object in sleep, and no discursive thinking through which any distinction can be realised. Can we maintain that in the absence of all distinctions, objectivity can still be realised as fact? If a content is known neither as distinct from myself, nor as distinct from some other content, how is it distinct from me. Indeed when we wake up, distinctions can be made. But these distinctions can have no relation to positive ignorance which has ceased to be object.

This brings us to our last point of criticism. The original experience that takes place in sleep and the memory-experience in wakefulness have no common object. What is originally experienced is something positive. What is remembered is nothing positive. That I did not know anything in sleep can only refer to the absence of knowledge in sleep, which itself is not at that time known. How can we then proceed from our present knowledge to posit some other knowledge in sleep which has no common object with it? If positive ignorance is to be proved, it cannot be proved on the evidence of the so-called memory-knowledge which we have on

waking up, but only by indicating some original and direct experience of it. But nobody can claim that this can be indicated by an appeal to sleep itself, when we have eliminated from our knowledge of sleep all that knowledge which we have on waking up,—the knowledge namely of the form, that I did not know anything, I was in complete darkness, etc. This position will be made clearer in the sequel.

We conclude that the reality of ignorance as such without reference to any object is not proved. But this at once raises the question of the facthood of sleep which is supposed to be a state of complete ignorance.

IX

It appears to us to be quite certain that we only know the fact of our having slept when we are said to wake up. There is no knowledge in sleep itself of our being asleep. If we conceived a situation in which we continued in sleep without ever waking up, there would be no awareness on our part that we slept; the supposed fact would not be realised as fact in our consciousness. It would be no fact at all. Its facthood is essentially connected with the fact of waking up.

Can we make a distinction between the fact itself and the fact as thus known by us? We indeed make a distinction. When we know as 'having slept', sleep is already past. But at the same time we cannot distinguish the fact of sleep from the fact as it is revealed to us on waking up. We have no other knowledge of the fact. We can never therefore argue that the fact

is some positive state if the only knowledge that we have of it is negative in character. We have already seen that the knowledge of sleep as a state of positive ignorance is nowhere given to us. It is not given in sleep. It is not given when we wake up. It is indeed true that on waking up we seem to know that the absence of knowledge which we find in sleep was itself not known in sleep, and that therefore the state itself is distinct from the mere absence of knowledge; it is some positive state of ignorance in which nothing is known. But this knowledge cannot be true and must be rejected. For when we wake up, the so-called positive state has already ceased to exist, and cannot be directly intuited. So far as memory is concerned, all our knowledge is of the form, 'I did not know anything'; the supposed positive state of ignorance does not form the content of any memory. But if the knowledge which we have on waking up has no relation to sleep as it is supposed to be in itself, and if there is no other knowledge of it, must we not, like the supposition of things-in-themselves, drop the supposition of a state of positive ignorance-in-itself? The distinction which we make between the actual sleep and our image of it cannot be validated and must be given up.

We shall be told that our knowledge of sleep is not merely confined to the awareness of ignorance. We have also the knowledge that we slept happily,—that we were in sweet slumber. How could we have this experience, if sleep were not a state of positive happiness, or if we did not experience happiness in sleep? But what is this happiness which we are said to have experienced in sleep? Does it refer to any object

enjoyed? If not, can we not explain it in a negative way? Absence of knowledge of things means absence of all intercourse with them, and so the cessation of all that pain which results from the efforts of the will towards adjustment. The feeling of well-being or of happiness can thus be explained without the supposition of some original experience of the same in sleep.

It might be said that although there is no enjoyment of any object in sleep, there must be a positive experience of happiness. This is the natural bliss of the self. It is the experience of this bliss which we remember when we become aware on waking up that we slept most happily and peacefully. It is however quite certain that the experience which we have on waking up of the happiness that is supposed to be ours in sleep, is the experience of a happiness that is very limited in its scope. It cannot be compared to the supreme bliss of the self. It is limited by a certain objective situation. The happiness due to the enjoyment of objects is relative to the objects enjoyed. The happiness of sleep is relative to another objective situation,—namely the absence of all intercourse with objects that causes the pain, the strain, and all the worry of life. This happiness is restricted; while the pure bliss of the self, of which all experiences of happiness may be said to be limited expressions, is un-restricted by anything. It is infinite.

A corollary follows from the above position. If the fact of sleep cannot be distinguished as something positive from the fact as known to us, then this appearance of sleep as a state preceding the knowledge of it can only be illusory. We are accustomed to think

that we first sleep, then we wake up, and afterwards we know that we slept. But this sleep which is said to precede its knowledge is not known *at the time;* it is *never* known as a positive content; and it is never *knowable* as such. To posit such sleep is really to posit something that is not only unproved, but that could never be proved; for if we conceived any knowledge which could possibly prove it, that knowledge would be self-contradictory. The only sleep that we *know* is the sleep that is related to the fact of wakefulness, and that has for its content the negation of all content of wakefulness. If we abstract from our knowledge of sleep *all reference* to wakefulness and its content, sleep represents nothing significant; it stands for no possible object of experience. The so-called real sleep that precedes wakefulness is thus found to be only a false and illusory appearance.

This seems to raise very formidable difficulties. We have not gone through any experience of real sleep. Have we then been awake all the while, and only mistakenly supposing ourselves to have gone to sleep, and then woke up, etc.? But the state of wakefulness is certainly not more real than the state of sleep. The extent to which we are sure that we are now awake is also the extent to which we are equally sure that we had been asleep. It cannot therefore be that we could have been all the time awake, and never gone to sleep at any time. If wakefulness is real, the other state cannot be less so. We shall now proceed to show that both the states are equally illusory.

We are accustomed to think that we know at least wakefulness directly; because it is a present state, and we are also in a position to know what is presented. But

this argument is fallacious. Wakefulness cannot be the object of waking consciousness. The objects known by the latter are either external or internal. Wakefulness is not an external object known through any of our senses. It is not an internal object like thought, feeling, desire, etc. We shall be told that it is the whole course of knowing objects, external and internal. But if the ego could reflect over this whole course of knowing, it would simply know it as that course. It would have no idea of *being awake*. Wakefulness can only become object to consciousness when it stands contrasted to some other state. There is evidently no other state during wakefulness to which wakefulness itself can stand contrasted. The only state to which it can have this relation is sleep. But the ego cannot be said to know sleep; for it is absent in sleep and does not function at all. The ego then cannot know wakefulness either. Wakefulness is not a present fact to *it*. It is fact only to that consciousness which goes beyond wakefulness, and has the intuition of sleep at the same time. The apprehension of states then would not be possible if we supposed that the ego-consciousness is the only consciousness. The ego can intuit neither sleep nor wakefulness. The intuition is only possible to a consciousness which does not appear to come and to go like the ego, and is beyond the states known by it.

We have seen before that sleep can only be apprehended in relation to wakefulness and as the negation of the content of the latter; if we did not wake up, we should never know sleep. We have now seen that if we did not intuit sleep from which we are said to wake up, we should not know wake-

fulness either. Thus the two states are only known in relation each to the other. In sleep, sleep cannot be known; in wakefulness, wakefulness cannot be known. The states then are not known successively. They can only be known simultaneously, for then alone can they be known as mutually related. The facts of experience bear out the same truth. It is when we are said to wake up, that we know both that we slept and that we have passed into another state or the state of wakefulness. The consciousness that knows this, cannot be either in sleep or in wakefulness. It apprehends both these states. It could not apprehend them if it were in any way subject to them.

It will now be argued that the states appear as successive and not as simultaneous. We can never appear to ourselves as both sleeping and being awake at the same time. In the very experience of waking up, sleep appears as a state which precedes wakefulness and which has already gone when wakefulness has set in. Simultaneity of apprehension is no reason for the unreality of succession in the objects. Any succession of states can evidently be known only in a simple and simultaneous apprehension. But that does not mean that the states are not successive or that they coexist. Sleep and wakefulness for example can never coexist, or be states of the same person at the same time. Whatever then the manner of our apprehension, the objective reality of succession cannot be denied.

We do not deny that sleep and wakefulness appear successive,—that we seem to have first slept and then woke up. But we deny that this appearance is a reality, —that we have ever, in point of fact, either slept or woke

up. This becomes evident when we ask, what entity passes through these states? Is it the waking ego? But the ego does not persist through the states. It does not exist in sleep. Sleep cannot be *its* state. Does the higher consciousness which is beyond the ego pass through the states? But *ex-hypothesi,* it neither sleeps nor does it wake up. It has no states; it cannot be said to pass through them. It is where it is, and can neither be said to leave one state nor to enter another. Its vision too is never successive; it is *akrama-dṛk* as it is called; it never perceives 'one after another' or successively, which is the character of all thought-knowledge.

What entity then has the states? We shall be told, the entity that apprehends them. But are we any nearer the solution? The higher consciousness may be said to apprehend the states. But it has no states. Also it can neither distinguish one state from another, nor any given state from itself. The ego alone can do that. But does the ego apprehend the states? It too has no states; and we have already seen that it can intuit neither sleep in which it is absent, nor wakefulness which is not presentable to *it* as a state. It is as impossible to say whose states they are, as to say who apprehends them. The claim must necessarily remain undefined. For they are not the real states of any entity; and no entity can be said to pass through them successively as its experiences. They have merely the *appearance* of being successive states of the self.

An objection might here be raised. It might be argued that in order that there should be an appearance of succession, there must be real succession in experience. In order, for example, that *a* should appear as prior to *b*,

there must first be the experience of *a*, then the experience of *b*, and lastly the knowledge that *a* is prior to *b*. There must thus be a real succession in experience in order to account for any appearance of succession. This may indeed be the case, where we have no reason to doubt the reality of objective succession. But once objective succession has been shown to be illusory, and *a* has been found to be not really prior to *b*, the respective experiences of the two also cannot have this relation in reality; we cannot say that the experience of *a* is really prior to the experience of *b*, but that the appearance of priority is part of the original illusory appearance. It is also clear that, in any case, we can only start from the knowledge of succession (which itself has no successive parts), and deduce from it any succession in knowledge; the latter as such and apart from the former is not a datum at all; its reality is thus wholly dependent upon the validity in point of fact of the knowledge of succession. We have already seen that the states are not real, and that therefore the knowledge of the succession of the states cannot be valid.

We conclude that the states together with the appearance of their successiveness are illusory. The only reality is the stateless consciousness which constitutes the ground of this appearance. Sleep as a state of positive ignorance is not real. But if our analysis is correct, then our original objections against the reality of ignorance hold good of all possible cases of ignorance without exception.

X

We have argued that everything that is objective in character is illusory. Even illusoriness and ignorance in general are not real. The only true reality is the Self, or the *ātman,* that is never an object. The empirical ego is not this self. For the ego can become our object. Its coming and its going are known. There is a consciousness beyond the ego. This is our true self. There is nothing beyond it that can know it, or make it an object. It is never given in self-consciousness. What is thus given is only the empirical self that is necessarily related to objects, and can therefore be distinguished from them. The true self cannot be so distinguished, and is not known. At the same time, it would be wrong to say that it is unknown. Whenever anything is known, it is in the knowledge of the self that it is known. This knowledge does not require to be further known. Its self-evidence is beyond doubt.

Everything that is knowable is negated in the self. The self is thus said to be known only through negation, —'not this', 'not this', or *neti neti* as it is called. This has led to some misunderstanding. What is left over of reality, it is asked, when every known content has been negated of the self? Have we not lapsed into pure nothingness? A reality that lacks every determination has nothing to distinguish it from mere non-being. We may indeed call it pure being. But what is the 'being-ness' about it, when there is no determinate content to which the affirmation of being can be attached? It is just this very absence of all determinate content that we can possibly mean by non-being,

or what is the very opposite of being. Pure being cannot thus be significantly spoken of as the true reality.

The above objection is based upon the supposition that non-being can also be non-objective. We have seen, in our analysis of the notion of positive ignorance, that this is far from being the case. The state of deep sleep is the most complete image we can ever have of the negation of all content. And yet we have seen that this state is nothing if it is not known. It implies a seer. It cannot be said to be something in itself. When therefore we picture ultimate reality and liken it to mere nothing, have we excluded from it this most subtle kind of objectivity, the negation of all content? The truth is that whenever we think of mere nothing or pure non-being, we can only think of it as the *privation* of content. We fail to see that this privation is only a new content and not the absence of all content. True absence or privation, if we so express ourselves, will lack nothing. It will not be *privation*, but the fullness of being. The latter does not exclude that true and ultimate privation which is never an object, but that pseudo-privation that introduces content through the very negation of content. All our ideas of nothingness are ideas of content negatively conceived. We never succeed in negating this negation; and yet on it depends the correctness of the view of reality above indicated.

Our conclusion is that in the Absolute Reality, which is our true Self, the whole realm of the objective, and also that ignorance which may in a sense be said to be the cause of the appearance of the latter, are cancelled. Even this cancellation must be supposed to be cancelled. That the knowledge of this reality appears to

us to be something still to be achieved is due merely to ignorance; and we have tried to show in this paper that although we cannot help using the concept, ignorance is not fact at all. It is eternally cancelled in the Reality, and yet we seem to think that the cancellation has still to be achieved. The distinction which we make of the different planes of reality, thus justifying to a certain extent the reality of error and of our efforts to get rid of it, has no metaphysical significance. The error and the efforts are alike illusory; so is any knowledge of the Absolute that is yet to come. The Absolute is eternally accomplished; and there is nothing beside it which exists. The individual is eternally free; he is freedom itself; because he is truly the Absolute. His only bondage is ignorance; and ignorance we have found to be no fact.



II
THE THEORY OF IGNORANCE IN ADVAITISM

BY

R. DAS

According to Advaitism, the absolute alone is real. The absolute is conceived as an undifferenced unity in which there is no distinction of any kind. It is pure consciousness, devoid of all objective contents. It follows therefore that in the absolute there is no duality or multiplicity, which always presupposes some distinction. It also follows that the absolute cannot be given as an object, because the pure, contentless consciousness can never be objectified. The absolute must therefore be free from objectivity and duality.

The world, which is always given as an object and which cannot be conceived apart from multiplicity and distinction, cannot be identified with, or made a part of, the absolute. The world and the absolute cannot obviously be identified, because they are of opposite natures. It is also clear that the world, which is so opposed in nature to the absolute, cannot be merged in the absolute and made one with it, without falsifying the nature of the absolute.

When the world cannot be identified with the absolute or included in it, we can only conclude that the world is utterly different from the absolute. And if the absolute alone is real, the world, which is different from the absolute, must be a false appearance. In fact there is no world, although we happen to see one. Our perception of the world is therefore an illusion.

How is this illusion possible? In every illusion we mistake one thing for another; and such a mistake is possible, because the thing to be known is not known

in its proper character and some false character is attributed to it. There is no mistake or illusion about a thing when it is known in its proper character. Ignorance of the real object is thus a necessary condition of all illusions. But the ignorance, which is necessary to explain an illusion, is not mere lack of knowledge. Where there is ignorance, necessary for illusion, there is no doubt lack of knowledge (of the real object), but there must also be attribution of some false character (to the object). Ignorance thus in the case of illusion functions in two ways; first, it prevents the knowledge of the real object and, secondly, it makes us see something else in the place of the object. Objectively considered, ignorance may be said to hide the real object from view (āvaraṇa) and to display a different object in the place of the real one (vikṣepa). The illusory object is not made up of any real constituents; it may be said therefore to be an effect or a mode of ignorance itself. Its substance is that of ignorance and it persists so long as ignorance is there. When the ignorance of the real object is removed by a true knowledge of it, the illusory object is no longer seen.

In the same way the theory of ignorance seeks to explain the illusion of the world. The only reality that is there is the absolute and in its place we see the world on account of our ignorance of reality. The world is an effect or a mode of ignorance. It is made of the stuff of which ignorance is made. It persists so long as the true knowledge of the absolute does not arise to dispel our ignorance. When knowledge arises, ignorance vanishes and with it the world too disappears.

Ignorance thus is the ultimate principle of advaitic cosmology. Every fact or event in the world, whether

physical or psychical, is explained as a mode of ignorance. The world, being an illusory appearance, also requires a real basis. The illusory object is seen in the place of the real one which supplies the basis of the illusory appearance. In the case of the world-illusion, the absolute supplies the basis. Whatever appears in the world-illusion does so on the basis of the absolute. But the form and the content of any appearance are not determined by the absolute which is present indifferently in all cases. It is ignorance that gives form and content to all appearances. The absolute is the basis of them only in the sense in which a real object is the basis of the illusory appearance which is seen in its place. The real object does not enter into the constitution of the illusory object and is not affected by the presence or the absence of the latter. In this sense is the absolute or Brahma the basis of the world and of everything in it. So far as the character and the constitution of the things in the world are concerned, they have to be referred to ignorance or ajñāna.

I

The Objective View of Ajñāna

How are we exactly to think of this ajñāna? Since it is the material ground of all things in the universe, it appears very much like Prakṛti. According to the Sāṅkhyas, everything in the universe has been evolved out of Prakṛti. In the advaitic theory too every kind of objective existence is described as a mode of ajñāna. When the advaitic writers try to describe the evolution of

the different forms of worldly existence, they trace them all to ajñāna. In fact, in their cosmology ajñāna occupies the same place as is given to Prakṛti in the Sāṅkhya system. The descriptions of ajñāna and Prakṛti are very much alike. Sometimes it is even expressly said that Māyā (i.e. ajñāna) is another name for Prakṛti.

How do we then distinguish the advaitic view of Ajñāna from the Sāṅkhya view of Prakṛti? The Sāṅkhyas think of Prakṛti as eternal, having neither beginning nor end; the advaitists regard ajñāna as beginningless but not without an end. Ajñāna comes to an end when the knowledge of Brahma arises. In the Sāṅkhya theory, Prakṛti is as real as Puruṣa and both can exist independently. In advaitism, ajñāna is not as real as Brahma, because it disappears while Brahma continues to exist; and as ajñāna cannot exist without the basis of Brahma it cannot be said to have any independent existence. But despite these differences from Prakṛti, when the whole evolutionary process of the world is traced to ajñāna, it is, I think, taken in all seriousness as a real entity. It is of course not as real as Brahma, but nevertheless it is real as far as it goes. When ajñāna is described as neither real nor unreal, it is meant, according to this view, that ajñāna is not real like Brahma which never ceases to exist and is not unreal like a fictitious entity (e.g. the horn of a hare) which never appears.

Although the ultimate reality is one without a second, it is not difficult for the advaitists to ascribe some reality to ajñāna, because they grant a kind of reality even to illusory objects. Our knowledge of any object is the test of its reality. We have no direct access to the inner

being of things. We can say that a thing exists, only when we know it. And since an illusory object is also known, it must be granted some reality. If it were altogether unreal, it would not be seen at all. Its relative impermanence certainly makes it less real than other ordinary objects but does not reduce it to nothing. When we allow some reality even to an illusory object, which appears only for a time and is in most cases seen by a single individual, it is not unreasonable to grant some reality to ajñāna which is relatively permanent and is experienced by us all in common in the form of the world. Still if we say that the ultimate reality is one without a second, we mean that it is without a second of of its own kind, and ajñāna surely does not enjoy the kind of reality which the ultimate reality, Brahma, has. Thus the absolute unity of Brahma is not affected by the reality of ajñāna.

From some other considerations also, it seems, we are forced to grant some reality to ajñāna. If we are to explain our experience, in which multiplicity and difference appear to be patently given, we cannot but accept some entity other than Brahma. Brahma is the principle of pure consciousness; it can explain neither the objects nor their differences which we experience. It is precisely to explain these elements that the theory of ajñāna has been formulated; and so, if we suppose that ajñāna has no reality or that there is absolutely nothing beside Brahma, then the facts of experience will remain altogether unexplained. It seems necessary, therefore, to accept ajñāna as a real entity (with the qualification that it is not as real as Brahma).

But can we not take ajñāna as a subjective fancy?

A subjective fancy is real and it very well explains the being of fancied objects. But it seems that we cannot take ajñāna as a subjective fancy. A subjective fancy explains only fancied objects, but the objects of the world are not like fancied objects and so they cannot be explained by a subjective fancy. That the objects of the world are not merely fancied can be readily seen from the fact that they are possessed of a fixity and an order which are foreign to fancied objects. We cannot make and unmake them as we can make and unmake fancied objects. The subject is always free in its fancy, but we never feel free in our experience of the world. We would like to see many things which we do not find and many other things are thrust upon us from which we would gladly keep away if we could. Moreover if everything were fancied, there would be no distinction between right knowledge and false knowledge and it would undermine all rational procedure in thought and conduct.

Besides if ajñāna meant mere subjective fancy, there would be no ajñāna in deep sleep, as there is no fancy in that state; and so everybody would get rid of ajñāna and realise mokṣa in sleep, without any effort on his part, thus rendering all spiritual discipline, under the guidance of a teacher in accordance with scripture, quite unnecessary.

Since the spiritual ideal is not already attained, it means that there is some real positive obstacle in the way to be overcome. This positive obstacle is ajñāna. This is also the ground of all objects. In fact objectless subjectivity, which is one with freedom or spiritual ideal, is not realised, because there is the appearance of objects.

So the obstacle, which prevents the realisation of the ideal, provides also the ground for the appearance of objects.

In false knowledge objects appear when they are known and endure so long as they are known. The objects of true knowledge exist, when they are not known by us, in ajñāna or in a state of unknownness. When they so exist, they are not merely unknown, because if they are simply unknown, we cannot even know that they exist. We have already said that the proof of the existence of any object is always the knowledge that we have of it. So if the objects are to exist as unknown, it is necessary that they should be known as unknown. And it is contended that when an object is not known, it is known as unknown. When we know an object, we also apprehend its knownness; but the knownness of an object can be apprehended when it is consciously distinguished from its unknownness. So when we apprehend the knownness of an object in knowledge, it implies that we were conscious of its being unknown when it was not known. But how can an object be known as unknown? Is it not a contradiction to speak of one and the same object as both known and unknown? The answer to this question is that by 'unknown' we are not to understand mere negation of knowledge. When we say that an object is known as unknown we only mean that it is indeterminately known. It is not known as characterised by any attributes but simply indefinitely known as being there. This is how things are known to exist in 'unknownness.' If we did not believe in such existence and supposed that things exist only in their 'known' state, i.e., only when they were known in their

determinate character, we should be unable to distinguish a case of valid knowledge from that of illusion. The objects of true knoweldge are distinguished from the illusory ones only by the fact that the former exist both before and after the occurrence of their knowledge, while the latter exist only when they are known in illusion and have no existence beyond it. When an illusory object is known to be such, we no longer believe in its objectivity, but in the case of other objects, even when they are not being known, we do not disbelieve in their objectivity. This means that although they are not known in their determinate character, they are indeterminately known as simply being there. We have already said that ajñāna is the ground of all objectivity. And since we believe in objective existence far beyond the range of our actual knowledge, we cannot but also believe that there must be ajñāna beyond individual knowledge and existence, to provide ground for objective being.

We are required further to posit two kinds of ajñāna, universal and particular. There is a general ajñāna which hides Brahma or Reality from our view and shows itself in various forms of worldly existence and to which all individuals in their worldly life are equally subject. But besides being ignorant of Brahma, we are ignorant of particular things of the world and in this ignorance we differ from one another. When I know an object, another person may not know it. In such a case it has to be understood that while my ignorance, veiling the object in question, is removed by my knowledge, his ignorance, hiding the same thing from his view, is not removed. When I see an illusory object,

another person may not see it; he may see the real object which is mistaken by me for another. Here my ignorance hides the real object from my view and shows itself in the form of the illusory object, while the other person has no ignorance about the object in question. The illusory object here is the product of my ignorance and therefore it appears within my experience. Thus we find that particular individuals have their particular ignorances which explain the facts of their private experience. All common objects, having relatively independent existence outside our individual knowledge, are the products of the universal or cosmic ajñāna, and all other objects which have no such independent existence and appear only to particular individuals are the effects of their respective particular ajñāna.

We have already pointed out that ajñāna in every case hides some real object from our view and shows itself in the form of some other object in the place of the real one. The hidden object is relatively the real object and the object which is shown forth is only an ajñānic form of the same. The illusory object, that I see, is the product of my ignorance which works with the support of the real object present before me. The real object is the support of my ajñāna and it is also the substratum of the illusory object seen in its place.

Brahma is the ultimate reality and it is hidden by the cosmic ajñāna which brings forth all forms of objective existence. Brahma is the support of this ajñāna and the substratum of all objects which are created by it. The different things of the world are the different forms in which Brahma appears under the cover of ajñāna. What we call a table is nothing but Brahma

determined by ajñāna in the form of the table. Brahma is thus the substance of everything that we see in the world; any particular object is nothing but Brahma appearing through ajñāna in the form of that object. When through our particular ignorance, an illusory object is seen in the place of a real one, what is hidden from our view is Brahma determined in the form of that object which is the substratum of the illusory object.

Nothing is absolutely unreal. The illusory object is less real than the ordinary object which is its substratum; and the ordinary object is less real than Brahma which is the substratum of all objective existence. Every experience has its characteristic object which cannot be altogether unreal, because if it were absolutely unreal, it would not be given in experience. Different objects have different grades or kinds of reality. So properly speaking there is no illusion in the sense of an experience that presents us with an object which is not there. The illusory object is also real, so long as it is there, inasmuch as it is created out there by my ignorance, and it is called illusory simply in the sense that it is removed by my knowledge of the object which is its substratum. Thus we see that as all objects are real (in their proper grade), ajñāna, which is the ground of them all, should be taken as no less real.

II

The Subjective View of Ajñāna

The view of ajñāna, explained in the last section, does not seem to bring out the true significance of the term. In order to understand the true meaning of ajñāna, we must view it in relation wth other important ideas of advaitism. The Advaita Vedānta is primarily a science of freedom (mokṣaśāstra), of freedom conceived as the ultimate spiritual ideal. This is accepted as the highest ideal, because it affords perfect satisfaction; and it can be perfectly satisfactory only if it is eternal and changeless. An ideal which is liable to change and exists only for a time cannot be perfectly satisfactory. But an eternal and changeless ideal cannot be brought into existence by our efforts, seeing that whatever is produced is liable to change and decay. The ideal must therefore be an eternally accomplished fact. It must be absolutely real because it is the highest ideal.

The ideal is not other than the self. What is other than the self cannot be attained unless the self is destroyed. But an ideal, which would require, in its attainment, the annihilation of the self, would be no ideal. Hence the ideal should not only be an eternally accomplished fact, but it should be also one with our very self.

But if the self is the ideal, and if as ideal, it is absolutly real, what accounts for our present condition which appears to be anything but ideal? It is precisely here that the theory of ignorance comes in. We are in fact eternally free but through some unaccountable ignorance, we imagine ourselves to be in bondage. It is because ignorance alone stands between ourselves and the ideal

that knowledge can be of any avail in realising our end. Ignorance thus means nothing but a misconception about our true nature. This misconception about the self or reality does not bring about a real change in reality, just as the misconception of a piece of rope as a snake makes no change whatever to the real rope.

Two things must be particularly borne in mind. We should note first that advaitism is essentially a doctrine of freedom. It is not primarily interested to give us a theory of the universe, calculated merely to satisfy our intellectual curiosities regarding the nature and character of objective things. It is interested mainly to deliver the message of an eternal and absolute freedom, which is self-revealing and self-revealed, and lies absolutely bare in its self-evidence at the depth of our soul.

We should note secondly that the means suggested for the realisation of this ideal is knowledge and knowledge alone. There are other ways of realising the highest spiritual ideal, advocated by other schools of thought. There are, for instance, the ways of action and devotion. But in opposition to these, advaitism advocates knowledge, pure and simple. This saving knowledge is not evidently the knowledge of objective things and their connexions which we ordinarily get from science and philosophy. The knowledge, which is required for our self-realisation, is the true knowledge of the self as it really is.

Our view of ajñāna should be in consonance with the view of the spiritual ideal and the means of its attainment, so unequivocally advocated in the Advaita Vedānta. That view of ajñāna will be clearly wrong which will make the present reality of mokṣa impossible or doubtful, or will

require anything but knowledge for its attainment. We find that this requirement is satisfied if we take ajñāna in the very ordinary and easily intelligible sense of mere ignorance. The self which is absolutely free and happy is through ignorance supposed to be in bondage and suffering, and it can get rid of its false bondage and suffering by knowing that it is really free. We are repeatedly told in advaitic literature that ajñāna is removed by knowledge If this is so, then by ajñāna we cannot understand anything but what is meant by ignorance in the commonest acceptance of this term.

That ajñāna should be taken as ignorance in the ordinary sense is clear also from the fact that it has an object. A mere positive entity, which is not of the order of knowledge or ignorance, cannot have an object. But ignorance in the ordinary sense can have an object. That of which one is ignorant may be said to be the object of one's ignorance.

We should take into our consideration another important point. Brahma, the ultimate reality, is, according to advaitism, pure intelligence, absolutely simple and altogether unconnected with anything else. But if reality is pure intelligence, what accounts for this unintelligent world? The absolute having no connexion with anything else, the world cannot be grounded in it. There is no rational connexion between Brahma and the world, as there is between a ground and its consequent. The absolute cannot create the world out of itself or out of any foreign material. For to create, in whatever way, is to act and to act is to change; and so if the absolute (Brahma) were to create the world, it would be finite and limited and cease to be

absolute. We are told that Brahma joined with ajñāna produced the world, that, though in itself unrelated with anything else, Brahma gets related with the world through the mediation of ajñāna. The real meaning of this statement seems to be that although in truth there has been no creation and there is no real connexion between Brahma and the world, we suppose in our ignorance that the world has been created by Brahma and is related with it. In fact there is no world, and what we think to be a world, including ourselves in it, is all a false show, generated by ignorance. That is to say, in ignorance, we think there is a world while in fact there is none.

This simple conception of ajñāna as mere ignorance may not find favour with many learned people. They may object that in advaitic literature ajñāna is invariably spoken of as beginningless (*anādi*) and as something positive in nature (*bhāva-rūpa*), having the power of veiling (*āvaraṇa*) and producing (*vikṣepa*) things, and constituting the material cause (*upādāna*) of the world; and we rannot imagine mere ignorance to transform itself materially into the form of the world.

They may also say that I have reduced advaitism to mere subjectivism which has been clearly repudiated by Śaṅkara in his criticism of vijñānavāda.

It may be further argued that my view of the matter leaves no being to the world, whereas in advaitism the world is not supposed to be wholly unreal. In fact advaitism is so realistic that it grants some reality even to illusory objects. To say that the world has no being is to say that there can be an appearance of a thing which is not there. This is as good as to support *asatkhyāti*

which Advaitism rejects in favour of *anirvacanīya-khyāti*.

They may further say that since I have reduced everything to mere appearance, I have abolished all distinctions between right knowledge and wrong knowledge, and have thus left no means of explaining our experience. Those who think that ajñāna is an indeterminate entity, which modifies itself into determinate objects of experience and maintains them in being when they are not known by us, offer at least an explanation of experience. But I am simply denying all experience.

I shall try to answer these objections one by one. First, the description 'beginningless' may be applicable to ignorance also. I was ignorant of many things which I have now learned. But can I or anybody else determine the date from which my ignorance of those things began? My ignorance of things which I never knew and do not know is as beginningless as the non-existence of an object before it is created (*prāgabhāva*). Moreover ignorance is beginningless in the sense that there is nothing objective prior to ignorance. All things, including time among them, being products of ignorance, ignorance must necessarily be thought of as without a beginning, i.e. as being no effect of anything else.

Ajñāna is no doubt spoken of as positive (*bhāva-rūpa*). But it is positive only in the sense that it is not nothing. Ignorance too is positive in this sense. Our ignorance of things, giving, as it does, rise to false conceptions about them, is not mere nothing.

The powers of *āvaraṇa* and *vikṣepa* may be ascribed to ignorance also, in the sense that when there is a mis-

conception about the true nature of a thing, there is lack of knowledge as well as a false idea about it.

As for ajñāna being the material cause of the world, it should be noted that by 'material cause' is meant that sort of cause which has the same kind of being as its effect. Earth is the material cause of a jar, because a jar is in substance nothing but earth. Similarly ignorance is the material cause of the world only in the sense that the different forms in which the world appears to us are nothing but forms of ignorance. Their reality is the reality of ignorance. They are there so long as ignorance is there, just as the ghosts are there in the trees so long as the child's false fear about them is there.

When Śaṅkara asserts, in refutation of Vijñānavāda, that external things are not mere ideas, he is not saying that either of them is real; both of them may be equally illusory. The Buddhistic position, criticised by Śaṅkara, is that the ideas alone are real and the so-called external things are nothing but our ideas. As against this, the Advaitic position is that, first, external things are not ideas and secondly, neither external things nor ideas are real; both are unreal and apparent.

When Advaitism maintains *anirvacanīyakhyāti* in opposition to *asatkhyāti,* it merely emphasises the fact that in illusion something is seen and it is not mere nothing that we see. But it does not mean that there is in fact an indescribable kind of real existence which we see in illusion. When we speak of anything as indescribable (*anirvacanīya*), we simply mean that it is not like a real thing which does not disappear, nor like an unreal one which does not at all appear. It is in this sense that we

say that it cannot be described either as real or as unreal. But we do not mean that there is any existent thing which is neither real nor unreal. When a sort of reality is granted to illusory objects, the real purpose is not to make the illusory also real, but to show that what we ordinarily take to be real, is not better than what appears in an illusion. We are not to raise the illusory to the level of the real, but to understand the essential hollowness, illusoriness or unreality of the so-called real things.

As regards the question that our view does away with the distinction between right knowledge and wrong knowledge, we have to confess that from the Advaitic standpoint all empirical knowledge is false. If any knowledge, other than Brahma-knowledge, which has no definite content, were true, it would constitute a complete refutation of Advaitism. So it is essential for Advaitism to maintain that all empirical knowledge is false. Still so long as we believe in empirical facts, we may have some empirical standard to judge of our knowledge of such facts as true or false; and this procedure will be valid so long as we are ignorant of true reality, just as our judgments of truth and falsity in dream hold good so long as the dream lasts. From the viewpoint of truth all our empirical judgments are equally false, just as from the point of view of waking life, all our dream-judgments are equally false.

It should be clearly understood that it is not the purpose of Advaitism to explain the facts of experience in the sense of supplying a rational basis for them. If the facts of experience, as they are taken to be, had a rational basis, they would remain what they are and we too would

remain bound in their fetters. The main objective of all Advaitic thinking is to reduce the so-called empirical facts to no facts; and this prupose would be entirely defeated if Advaitism confirmed their facthood by supplying a rational basis. The supposed explanation by the theory of ajñāna is, I believe, intended merely for the initial satisfaction of those who have not yet emancipated their minds from the tyranny of objective facts. But in fact the supposed explanation is no explanation at all. The facts of experience are supposed to be explained by Brahma and ajñāna. They cannot be explained by Brahma alone. But how are Brahma and ajñāna to be brought together? You cannot bring together light and darkness. If ajñāna remains apart from Brahma, there will be dualism; if ajñāna becomes one with Brahma, Brahma will lose its purity and cease to be Brahma. So it is evident that the supposed explanation is an illusory one.

Thus we find that the objections against the view that ajñāna is mere ignorance are not insuperable on the basis of Advaitism. We can go further and say that the view of ajñāna as real positive entity residing in Brahma is really inconsistent with the thesis of Advaitism. If there is another entity beside Brahma, there will be no real absolute unity which Advaitism seeks to maintain. You may say that ajñāna is not like Brahma; it is neither eternal nor independent as Brahma is. But when there is another entity, however short-lived and however dependent upon it, the ultimate reality is not an absolute unity in any straightforward sense of the term. There will be unity only in the sense that there is nothing like Brahma but not in the sense that there is nothing besides

Brahma. In this highly Pickwickean sense, absolute unity cannot be claimed exclusively by the advaitic absolute but it can be shared in common by the Hegelian or Rāmānujist absolute also.

Moreover if we believe in ajñāna, as a real entity, however unlike Brahma, it becomes difficult for us to understand how it can ever be removed. It is of course said that it is removed by knowledge. But knowledge only reveals the nature of things, it can never destroy them. It is said that just as our knowledge of an object removes the positive ignorance covering that object, so our knowledge of Brahma will remove the root-ignorance which covers Brahma. But here the first difficulty is whether it is possible to have a knowledge of Brahma which is like the knowledge of an object (*vṛtti-jñāna*). There seems to be no objective mode of knowledge which will fit in with the characterless nature of Brahma. Secondly even if there is such a knowledge, what is the guarantee that it will really destroy the positive entity, ajñāna, especially when this knowledge itself is a mode of ajñāna? If, however, we think of ajñāna as mere ignorance, it is perfectly intelligible why it should be removed by knowledge.

III

The Ultimate Status of Ajñāna

We have taken ajñāna to be mere ignorance and the question will naturally arise: 'To whom does this ignorance belong?' It cannot belong to the absolute, because it is pure consciousness and as it makes no judg-

ment, it is not liable to any error or illusion. Ignorance cannot belong to individuals also, because they are the products of ignorance and cannot therefore be the seat of ignorance which must be present before them.

The answer to the question is that ignorance evidently belongs to the person who considers himself to be in bondage. The man who labours under a delusion is the man who is ignorant. Nobody is in fact in bondage and still if we think that we are in bondage, then it is we who are ignorant. If our limited individuality were really the product of previously existing ignorance, then of course we could not be the seat of that ignorance. But in fact we are not produced or limited by anything. We have simply the false idea of the world, including ourselves in it as limited beings, and this is the work of ignorance. My individuality consists in my limitedness. But although I am not really limited, I, in my ignorance, consider myself to be so; this is how I am the product of my own ignorance.

We may even say that ignorance belongs to Brahma or the absolute. What are we after all? We are nothing but the absolute itself which is the support and substance of everything that is. Ultimately everything has to be referred to Brahma and so if ignorance is anything, it must rest on Brahma.

But is ignorance anything at all? We have said that we have the false idea of our limitedness and are thus the product of our own ignorance. But false ideas are possible only for limited beings who can be ignorant. When in fact there are no limited beings how can there be any ignorance at all? If in truth I am the absolute reality, which is pure knowledge, how is it then possible

for me to be ignorant also? If the ultimate reality is all knowledge, how is it conceivable that there should be ignorance anywhere?

We must admit that in truth there is no ignorance. It is mere ignorance to suppose that there is ignorance. The world-appearance is no doubt an illusory show born of sheer ignorance; but it would be ignorance again to suppose that there is any real ignorance. We are not to be led on to an infinite regress by supposing one ignorance behind another. We can more reasonably suppose that it is one and the same ignorance which appears to be there and also produce the illusory appearance of the world.

But if ignorance is not really there, there is no reason why there should be an appearance of the world. Yes, there is no reason why the world should be there. If any such reason were there, it would be impossible to reject the world as a baseless fiction. We have to understand that the world is not there and cannot be there, and still we seem to see it. It is on this account that we call it indescribable (*anirvacanīya*). That which cannot possibly be and is still seen is called *anirvacanīya*.

It may be supposed that in saying that there is no ajñāna, we are going against many advaitist authorities who, with many subtle arguments based on perception, inference and other sources of knowlege, establish the being of ajñāna which is present not only in dream and waking life but also in sleep, when nothing is seen, and persists even in *pralaya* or dissolution when no worldly life exists. In answer to this, we have to point out that there is surely ajñāna so long as we suppose that there are different states of the self as waking, dreaming and

sleeping, and different states of the world as creation and dissolution. But we should understand that from the advaitic standpoint these states are but ignorant fancies. The advaitic proof establishes the presence of ajñāna in all such states, whether of the self or of the world, and really means that they are all illusory. The purpose of advaitism is not to establish in truth the being of ajñāna, for that would be blocking the way of our liberation. Advaitism has to take us out of ajñāna and this it can do only by imparting to us the sure knowledge that in truth there is no ajñāna.

From the ultimate point of view, therefore, there is no ajñāna and there is no objective apppearance also. But perhaps we shall be claiming too much for the advaitist if we suppose that he sees no appearance at all. But although he may not say in common parlance that he does not see any appearance, he believes, if he is true to his faith, that there is no real appearance, and with a proper training of his spiritual insight he will see and realise that there is and has been no appearance at all.

But so long as one is in the realm of Philosophy, one cannot deny all appearance. Without appearance there is no objectivity, and without objectivity, there is no thinking, and without thinking no philosophy is possible. So even advaita philosophy cannot deny that there is some appearance. It will only insist that the appearance is mere appearance and, in fact, is not there at all.

It may be noted here that the advaitists do not claim to arrive at their conclusion about the nature of ultimate reality by a ratiocinative process. By no amount of logical thinking about the facts of experience, you can

ever come to the conclusion which denies all facts. The nature of ultimate reality is revealed by scripture and accepted on faith. The revelation may in reality mean nothing more than a change in the spiritual outlook, resulting in a conviction that there is nothing of value in objective things, that all peace, light and being are from within and cannot be derived from without. This conviction sets the task and defines the goal of advaitic philosophy.

The main purpose of advaitic philosophy is to guard its revealed truth against all possible doubts and criticisms as well as to demonstrate its possibility to our reason. The principal problem is, on the one hand, to show whether what in reality is nothing can yet put up an appearance and, on the other, to bring to us a clear notion of self-evidencing subjectivity as something possible and real without the least connexion with anything objective.

By a careful examination of the fact of illusion it may be shown that the appearance of what in fact is not can and does take place. Every contradiction, which is not merely verbal, is a false appearance. It cannot be anything in fact, still our thought stumbles against it.

By an examination and analysis of our ordinary notion of subjectivity, it may be shown that subjectivity does not really involve any objective element.

But when all this is done, what is actually established is that the object *may be* a false appearance and the subject *may be* really free from all objective encumbrances. But so long as the appearance is there, its ultimate nothingness, though believed from scriptural testimony with the assent of reason, is not fully realised.

The full realisation of the illusory as no fact comes when it ceases to be seen and is not even remembered. We may believe that the subject is absolutely free but we do not live and enjoy it so long as it is, or appears to be, oppressed by an objective appearance. It is therefore incumbent on a real advaitist to cure himself, by some spiritual discipline, of the false delusion which makes him see an appearance where there is none, and to raise thereby his conviction to a vision in which nothing but true shines in its purity and immediacy.

Our conclusion then is that in truth ajñāna is nothing at all. For philosophy which is not truth itself, but an attempt to make truth rationally intelligible, ajñāna is a false appearance, which cannot be real because of its inconsistencies, but is still seen to be there. For common sense and science, wedded to objective outlook, ajñāna may be taken to be the ultimate stuff out of which the various forms of worldly existence have been evolved.

IV

The Philosophical Basis of the Theory

All philosophical theories, when consistently held, are found on examination to depend on certain ultimate positions in logic, epistemology and metaphysics. These positions work as ultimate convictions whose validity is not questioned or doubted by their adherents. They cannot directly be proved or disproved but other propositions are proved or disproved on their basis. In any case our understanding of a philosophical theory is bound to remain inadequate so long as we have not seen the

underlying principles on which it is based. I shall therefore try in this section to bring out the basic positions which seem to support the theory of ajñāna.

It seems that 'A is A' is the only form of judgment that a supporter of the theory of ajñāna can understand in logic. That is to say, he believes in pure identity and has in his logic no use for what is usually described as 'identity in difference.' He strongly insists that what is different cannot be identical and a thing can never be what it is not. This seems to express a self-evident truth for him and what goes against it is held by him to be quite erroneous.

Even when he says 'A is B,' he does not take A and B in their literal sense, because literally they stand for different things and what is different cannot be identified. He has to change the meanings of A and B, so as to make the proposition an expression of some underlying identity. The relational propositions of modern logic and the predicative propositions of traditional logic are both equally unwelcome to an advaitist. Since his logic does not permit relational propositions, he cannot accommodate multiplicity and difference in his philosophy, and since he does not accept even the predicative form, he cannot ascribe any character to his reality. Can he assert any proposition, even 'A is A,' since there must be some difference between the first A and the second A? The proposition surely says something about something and this is not intelligible without ideally introducing some difference between the subject and the predicate. Hence he ultimately rejects all propositional knowledge, but there is no doubt that 'A is A' is the nearest approach to the expression of undifferenced identity.

It is easy to prove the theory of ajñāna on the basis of this principle. The main contention of this theory is that the world is false. By 'the world' we are to understand the world as it is known by us. We cannot discuss about any other world. Now this world appears to us to consist of things and their qualities. The ideas of 'things' and 'qualities' are essential to our notion of the world. A world of mere qualities, not owned by any things or a world of mere things having no qualities is not and cannot be known by us. But the conception of a thing and its quality can arise only when some distinction has been made between them; and we are able to make this distinction because we think that a thing remains the same although its quality changes. If a thing appeared and disappeared along with its quality, there would be no distinction between them. Hence it is necessary that a thing should possess variable qualities. That is to say, a thing with a particular quality should remain the same even when that quality is absent. This is the underlying presupposition of the conception of things and qualities, and of our ordinary view of the world. But this presupposition cannot be justified. Ap_1 is never $= Ap_2$, where p_1 and p_2 stand for different qualities. As $Ap_1 = Ap_2$ is clearly false, because it violates the principle of identity, our view of the world which involves this must also be false.

We are led to the same conclusion also by a slightly different consideration. The world is amenable to our thought only by virtue of its possessing certain common universal characters. Without these common elements, the world will not be thought and known. A common

element is that which appears in different contexts without losing its identity. But is it possible? If what is here is only here, then we cannot say that what is here is also there, i.e. not here. Thus we see that our view of the world as pervaded by universal elements, presupposes the impossible position of a thing's being what it is not, and hence it must be considered as false.

The main advaitic position in epistemology can be summarised in the following three propositions:—

1. Self-evidence is the meaning and criterion of truth.
2. Knowledge is the prius of everything else.
3. The subject can never be an object.

1. If we do not accept self-evidence as the meaning of truth, we have to suppose that a piece of knowledge is true because it satisfies certain conditions different from itself or its self-evidence. Here two questions arise: first, why should we accept the satisfaction of these conditions as the mark of truth? and, secondly, how do we know in any particular case that these conditions have been satisfied? As regards the first question, we can answer either that the satisfaction of these conditions defines truth because of some other reason or that it is self-evident that the meaning of truth is brought out by the satisfaction of these conditions. We cannot follow the first alternative very far and have to fall back upon the second alternative at some stage or other. And this alternative says in substance that a thing is true because it is self-evident. As regards the second question, it has to be noted that a knowledge cannot be taken to be really true unless the knowledge that

the required conditions are satisfied is true. In order to know (1) that a particular knowledge is true, we must know (2) that it satisfies the conditions necessary for its truth. Here we see that the truth of the first knowledge is dependent on the truth of the second knowledge, and since we have not accepted self-evidence as the criterion of truth, the second must depend on a third and so on add infinitum. In order to avoid the vicious series, we have to accept some knowledge as true because of its self-evidence. Why should we not then consciously accept from the beginning that self-evidence is the meaning and the criterion of truth?

If self-evidence alone gives us real truth, then we find that all our objective knowledge is infected with untruth. Whatever can be doubted is not self-evident and there is no object of any experience which cannot be doubted. Whatever is given as a content in our experience can be doubted. Nothing appears in our knowledge with the mark of its reality patent on its face. But when everything is doubted, is there anything left over which is self-evident? Though every object can be doubted, knowledge as such is never doubted. It is present even in doubting. Thus knowledge comes to be regarded as alone true, everything else is other than truth, i.e. false.

2. The above position is confirmed by the theory that knowledge is the prius of everything else. It is ordinarily supposed that the object must already be there and the subject which is also conceived in an objective way, must also be there, before knowledge can arise as a result of their interaction. This idea is utterly foreign to advaitic way of thinking. The advaitist insists

that prior existence of objects, independent of all knowledge, can never be estabilshed and knowledge can never be seen to arise as a result of any objective conditions. We prove or disprove other things on the basis of knowledge, and there is no means by which knowledge may be disproved at any time or place. Everything else requires some proof for its being in terms of knowledge; knowledge alone is its own proof. Knowledge must be taken as something ultimate and recognised as the only instance of absolute being.

We find that objects are given in knowledge. Objects outside knowledge cannot be known by us and we have no right to believe in their existence. But objects cannot exist even within knowledge. If the objects are not connected with knowledge they will not be known. And if they are to be connected with knowledge, they must either be in contact with knokledge or be identified with it. These are the only two ways in which we can conceive of a real direct connexion between two real entities. But there is no contact between knowledge and objects, because contact is available only between two material things and knowledge is not a material thing. Nor can knowledge be identified with its objects, because knowledge is an intelligent principle and objects are quite unintelligent. Thus we see that objects cannot exist in knowledge, although they appear to be there. They must therefore be an illusory appearance.

3. This position might be avoided if we believed that the subject can also be an object. If the subject could also be an object, then the subject in its self-evidence would include the object also. We might then

easily suppose that there is a universal subject whose objective aspect is constituted by the visible world. But advaitism rules out any such hypothesis. It holds rigorously to the view that the subject and the object can never be identified, so that whatever can be objectified has to be kept apart from the subject. The subject and the object are utterly disparate in their nature and being. If truth and reality belong to the subject, they must be denied of the object. The object obviously lacks the self-evident character of the subject and cannot therefore claim the truth which the subject enjoys. If by reality we mean independent reality, then it cannot belong to the object, seeing that the object is dependent on the subject. It may be objected that if the object is dependent on the subject, the subject is no less dependent on the object, because there is no subject without an object. In answer to this objection, it has to be pointed out that pure consciousness, which really constitutes the un-objective being of the subject, has in itself no character called 'subjectivity.' Its subjectivity appears in relation with objects and is consequently as illusory as the objects themselves. Ultimately there is only pure consciousness, free from the duality of subject and object. Its being, in and for itself, absolute and independent, cannot be described in terms of any positive character.

Since advaitism regards knowledge as the ultimate reality, its metaphysics cannot be sharply distinguished from its epistemology. Still certain of its considerations concerning being may be treated as metaphysical rather than epistemological. They too are inspired by some simple pre-suppositons. We can mention two here: first, being never passes into non-being and secondly

being is absolutely simple. The first proposition does not simply repeat the logical principle 'A is A.' The logical principle expresses our inability to think A as not-A. The metaphysical principle expresses the factual impossibility of real being passing out into non-being. It emphasises the fact that the real can never be made unreal. It may be supposed that we always find new things produced and old things destroyed in nature. But what is actually found is only change of form. Nowhere is it found that something has come out from absolute nothing or that something, which was real, has become absolute nothing. Only a false appearance can vanish but real being can never cease to exist. If being could be made and unmade, there would remain no meaning in being.

The second proposition that being is absolutely simple is proved by the fact that our idea of being, even to the most rigorous examination, does not reveal any constituents which are simpler than itself. Being is never a compound or a complex product of two or more constituents. If being were to be produced by two or more things, those things would have to be either real or unreal If they are real, then being is already granted to be there without being produced; and if they are unreal, i.e. without any being, then being would come out of nothing which is impossible. What is not simple must be a product of its constituent elements. As being cannot be a product, we have to grant that it is absolutely simple.

Let us now see the consequence of these positions. Since being is absolutely simple, and it cannot pass into non-being, it follows that there is no change in real being. If being were something consisting of many elements,

then by different arrangements of these elements, we might maintain change in being without turning it into non-being. But as being is absolutely simple, its change cannot mean anything but its turning into non-being which is impossible. But in fact we seem to find change in the world. This change cannot belong to being as such; it belongs to the different forms in which being appears. It is only the forms that change. As being cannot change and as there is no form which does not change, being as such must be formless. But if being is formless, what about the world which appears only in some form or other? We clearly see that we cannot assign real being to the world.

It may be argued that although being is simple and formless, it accepts the determinations of many forms. But how are the determining forms related to being? They are either identical with being or different from being or both identical with and different from it. If they are different from being, so that being is kept apart from them, then they become unreal and being unreal, they cannot determine anything. They cannot be identified with being, because the unchanging being is never the same thing as the changing forms. We cannot also say that there is both identity and difference between being and forms, because it involves self-contradiction, identity and difference being incompatible with each other. We have therefore to conclude that real being is changeless and formless. All forms and change are its illusory appearance.

Thus we see that such simple propositions as 'A is A,' 'the subject is not the object,' 'being never passes into non-being' etc., which are not generally doubted in

ordinary thought, inevitably lead, when rigorously maintained, to the conclusion that the world given as an object with changing and various forms is nothing but an illusory appearance. This is exactly what the theory of ajñāna seeks to maintain.

In logic we are confronted with the problem of identity and difference. Logic cannot operate without identities applied to different contexts. In epistemology we have the problem of the relation of knowledge and its object. Is the object transcendent to knowledge or immanent in it? If the object is transcendent, then no real knowledge seems possible; and if it is immanent, then it becomes very difficult to conceive how an object with its material characteristics can exist in the medium of knowledge. In metaphysics we have the similar difficulty of understanding the relation of one and many. There is some marked unity running through all facts of experience and nobody can also deny the infinite diversity which characterises them. How are the many to be combined with the one?

The advaitist is persuaded that it is impossible to combine identity and difference, knowledge and object, one and many, into a real unity. Since they appear together and do not admit of real unity, the only possible solution, says the advaitist, is the one that is offered by the theory of ajñāna. What is real is identity, knowledge and unity of being; difference, objectivity and multiplicity are its illusory appearances. It is only in this way that the combination of incompatible characters can be made possible.

V

The Difficulties of the Theory

The theory of ajñāna, as has been already indicated, is inspired by scriptural revelation and is to be ultimately validated by actual realisation in which there is no sense or appearance of duality. But philosophy cannot profitably utilise such non-intellectual sources of knowledge for the solution of its difficulties. Revelation may be false, since the faithful in all religions claim the support of revelation in behalf of their divergent faiths, and it is certain that all of them cannot be true; and it is impossible to decide which of them is true, merely on the basis of revelation. The so-called realisation is an individual experience which cannot be relied on unless supported by evident reasons. If a man gets into a trance in which he is not aware of any objectivity or duality, that will not decide, for philosophy at least, whether in fact there is any duality or objectivity. If Philosophy is to accept any theory, it will have to be supported by reason. Are there sufficient reasons in favour of the theory of ajñāna? We have already given some reasons which go to support this theory. In this section we shall try to bring out certain difficulties which a student of Philosophy is most likely to feel in understanding and appreciating this theory.

The theory says that the world of objects is an illusory appearance. It is very difficult to give any direct positive proof of this theory. The objects certainly appear in knowledge. The question is whether they actually exist where they are seen to appear. It may be granted that, as we are acquainted merely with the

appearance of objects in knowledge, and as we have no access to the being of objects (as enjoyed by them), we have no ground to assert that objects do exist. But although I may have no ground to assert that they exist and may not know whether they exist, I am not justified in saying that they do not exist. Not to know whether a thing exists is not the same thing as to know that it does not exist. When I reject the proposition that I have any ground to assert that things exist, I do not thereby reject the proposition that things exist, for the two propositions speak of very different things; one proposition speaks of my having any ground for making a certain assertion and the other speaks of the existence of things. When I am made to say that I do not know that things exist, I am not compelled to say that I know that they do not exist. And unless I know that things have no existence, I cannot say that they are an illusory appearance.

It may be supposed that there are at least two proofs for this theory. First, we all have the experience of illusion, and the object of so-called oridnary experience is given in the same way as the object of illusory experience. Therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that all experience is equally illusory. Secondly we find that the concepts, in terms of which we think of objective existence, e.g. the conecpts of substance, causality, relation, etc., are all riddled with contradiction; and since there is no contradiction in real existence, the existence grasped through such contradictory notions must be illusory.

Both these arguments appear to be faulty. Let us consider the first argument. We know an objective experience to be illusory only on the basis of some other objective experience which we take to be true. The

distinction between illusory experience and valid experience is essential to our understanding of any experience as illusory. When this distinction is the basis of the argument, it cannot validly lead to the conclusion that all experience is illusory, a conclusion which clearly obliterates this distinction. If the conclusion is right, then the basis of the argument must be wrong, and we cannot have a valid argument on a wrong basis. And if the basis is right, then the conclusion must be wrong, which goes against it. Therefore the whole argument must be a fallacious one. In fact an argument which denies in its conclusion all that is presupposed in its premises is no argument at all. We can very easily see the fallacy if we put the argument in a logical form. Put in a logical form the argument will stand thus: Illusory experience is objective and ordinary experience is objective; therefore ordinary experience is illusory. The argument may be put in some other form, but in any case we shall find that there is either the fallacy of undistributed middle or that of illicit minor. Put very briefly the argument says in substance that because some knowledge is false, therefore all knowledge is false; and this appears rather absurd. It may be conceded that when we know some knowledge to be false, we may have a suspicion that all knowledge is false. But a *suspicion* that all knowledge may be false is very different from the positive *conclusion* that all knowledge is false. And this conclusion appears to be unwarrantable.

When we recognise a particular experience to be illusory, what we deny is the presence of the object seen at the place where it appears. What we do not deny is the presence of some other object in its place or the presence

of the same object at some other place. So even when we recognise the whole world-appearance to be illusory, we cannot deny all objective existence. What we deny is the validity of the present appearance of the world. We do not and cannot thereby come to the conclusion that there is no object whatever in its place.

Even if we somehow suppose that there are no external objects, we do not reach the position which the theory of ajñāna demands. We have to deny not only the external objects but also the internal states of the mind. That is to say, we have to see not only that the object seen is not there but also that there is no seeing of it. This seems quite impossible. An objective experience may be quite illusory in the sense that the object of experience, as experienced, does not exist. The being of the object is not one with our experience of it, and so though our experience may be there, the object may not be there, and our experience may turn out to be illusory. But the being of a subjective state is one with our being aware of it. Therefore it is impossible to suppose that a subjective state may be absent even when I am aware of it. Even when we realise that our perception of an object was illusory, we merely deny the existence of the object perceived, we never deny our subjective perception of it. If the perception itself were not there, there would be nothing to be described as illusory. Thus we find that the immediate subjective states are never illusory. If they are not illusory, then the theory of ajñāna is not completely established.

Turning to the second argument we have to point out that our ordinary ideas of objective existence are not found to be infected with self-contradiction by all intelligent

persons. So when we find self-contradiction in them, it need not necessarily mean that they are false; it may only mean that our analysis of them has been defective. Even when we are sure that there has been no mistake in our analysis and contradiction is still there, we are not called upon to deny objective existence as such, but to formulate other categories which will be adequate to the expression of such existence. One can never reasonably argue that because our ordinary notions of objective existence are defective, there is no objective existence or that no ideas can ever be formed which will be free from the defects in question.

It may be supposed that although there is no clear positive proof for this theory, it explains the facts of experience better than any other theory and is therefore most likely to be true.

We have already pointed out that the theory of ajñāna cannot claim to explain any facts of experience. It is not one of the many theories that can be propounded to explain experience. It is the denial of all possible theories that seek to explain the facts of experience. Any metaphysical theory that will explain such facts must show how they are connected with reality. Such a theory will substantiate the facts and will not deny them. The theory of ajñāna, on the other hand, purports to show that reality has no connexion with the facts of experience, and these facts in reality are no facts at all. This theory will be justified if it can be shown that all possible explanations of the facts of experience are wrong. But although the current theories may be wrong, one can never be reasonably sure that no theory is going to be right. There is no limit to human ingenuity. We can never exhaus-

tively know what theories are possible with regard to the facts of experience, and so it is impossible to decide at any time that all possible theories have been judged and found wanting. Thus the proof of the theory of ajñāna by a disproof of all other possible theories is not possible. Moreover so long as we are confronted with the appearance of facts, we have not the slightest reason to prefer a theory which simply denies the fact to any other theory which, however inadequately, makes an attempt to give a rational explanation of these facts.

We have so far seen that there is no reason to believe that the theory of ajñāna is undoubtedly true. Is there any reason to think that it is positively false? It sometimes so happens that although a theory cannot be proved to be right, it cannot also be proved to be wrong. We shall now consider whether there is any reason which goes positively against this theory.

We saw in section 3 that ajñāna is nothing. When the ultimate reality is pure knowledge, there is no place for ajñāna or ignorance anywhere in reality. But when there is no ajñāna, how can there be any objective appearance at all? We are then required to say that there is in fact no objective appearance. It will not do simply to say that in fact there is no objective appearance but we falsely imagine one to be there, for in that case false imagining at least will have to be granted which will be inconsistent with the non-being of ajñāna. When the theory of ajñāna is consistently maintained, it leads to the position that there is even no false appearance. But if there is no false appearance, the theory of ajñāna will have no meaning; in fact it will not be there at all.

Thus our difficulties here are twofold. First, when

we are seeing an appearance, the theory of ajñāna, which implies that there is no appearance at all, cannot but appear false. However wrong-headedly we may imagine an appearance which is not there, our wrong-headed imagination is a complete refutation of the theory. Secondly, if there is no appearance, the theory is not needed to declare its falsity. And besides when appearance is denied, the theory, which is part of appearance, is also denied. Thus it appears that the theory is killed by its own inherent self-contradiction.

It may be supposed that ultimately there is no appearance and the theory itself is not there; but so long as we are ignorant, the appearance is there and the theory is needed. When we see the truth, there is no appearance and there is no theory.

But the ultimate state of things is not something yet to come about. It is ever present, and the question is whether it can ever allow the appearance of anything at all. When in reality there is no ignorance and there are no individuals, it is impossible that there should be any appearance. The ultimate reality is pure knowledge and not knowledge of things. It does not see appearances; it is purely and merely seeing. There is absolutely nothing in reality, according to this theory, that can either see an appearance or be seen as an appearance.

It is evident that our difficulty will not be solved by the supposition that the appearances are like dream-appearances which seem real in dream but are not so in fact. There is no inherent impossibility in the idea of seeing dreams when we grant that men pass through different states. But it is utterly impossible for Brahma, which is pure light and does not pass through states, to

see any appearance. Moreover just as we cannot judge in dream that the appearances, we then see, are false, we cannot also judge, while we are seeing appearances, that there are no appearances at all.

The theory in the last analysis must deny all objectivity and in so doing it must deny all thinking. For there can be no thinking without objectivity. This being so, this theory cannot even be asserted, far less accepted, by thought. It is impossible thinkingly to know that thinking as such is illusory or erroneous. The verdict of thought that it is erroneous appears as self-contradictory as the declaration of a man that he is dumb. From this point of view the plea that thought may know its own limitation seems quite unacceptable.

We thus find that the theory of ajñāna, which must needs deny all objectivity and appearance, cannot be verified in experience or validated by thought. Every step in our thought and experience is a direct contradiction of this theory. In fact the contradictions, which the advaitist finds in other philosophical theories, are neither met nor avoided by him. They are simply summed up in a more pronounced form in his theory of ajñāna.

But, for advaitism, philosophy is not the last word in the matter of truth. In fact the advaitic truth is not realised by mere philosophising and cannot be expressed in the form of a philosophical theory. It is realised in direct intuition. So in saying that the theory of ajñāna seems philosophically untenable, I am merely asserting, from the advaitic point of view, that truth cannot be found in the realm of untruth, a perfectly innocuous proposition which leaves the advaitic position quite unaffected. If people are blessed with a mystic vision in

which there is no appearance of objectivity and all memory of past experience lapses for ever and if the vision or intuition comes with the compelling conviction that it is the truth and reality, then all our philosophical difficulties can do nothing to it. For, in the first place, nothing is more convincing than immediate personal experience and, secondly, our philosophical difficulties simply cannot exist for such mystic consciousness. Those who have a leaning towards mysticism and believe in the reality and truth of mystic intuition, may very well imagine that their present experience, characterised by objectivity and multiplicity, has no substance of truth in it. The theory of ajñāna thus does not express an actually experienced fact or a truth that can be logically thought. It expresses a faith and a demand which necessarily accompany a certain spiritual outlook. The faith is that the apparent is nought, although it is not yet realised to be such, and the demand is that it should be so realised. The faith and the demand cannot, from the nature of the case, be justified and fulfilled in secular life and thought. The justification and fulfilment can come, if at all, only from a spiritual illumination in which all objective appearance will finally and totally disappear.

III

AJÑĀNA

BY

T. R. V. MURTI

1

Nature of the Inquiry

An enquiry about Ajñāna—Ignorance—must appear queer and, in any case, barren. The least that is demanded of any topic of enquiry is that it should be an actual or possible object of thought. I am ignorant of what is happening in Timbuktu; by this I mean merely that if I chose to interest myself in the happenings there, it should be possible for me to know them through one or the other source of knowledge available to us. The truly unknowable, however, is not an object of thought; it cannot be described or characterised, but is merely representable by symbols e.g. by words. The unknowable is not a theme of investigation. Ignorance, to escape a similar predicament, must be a knowable, an object of thought. Itself an object beside many others, it cannot have any other as its object; it is improper to speak, then, as being ignorant *of* something. What is more befitting than to dismiss the subject with a few apologetic remarks about the deplorable limitation of human thought and its tendency to mislead? A less fruitful topic for investigation can hardly be chosen.

Precisely the same considerations might be urged against those philosophers who have made it their special concern to investigate 'knowing'. Knowing though not an object of thought is still claimed as a proper subject of enquiry; *prima facie,* no insurmountable objections need be raised against ignorance. It is but the reverse

of knowledge. Though not an object, 'knowing' is still an indubitable fact of experience; it cannot be denied without palpable contradiction. The same may be said about ignorance.

It is not necessary for us to go elsewhere in search of Ajñāna. That I have undertaken this inquiry is a sufficient proof that I am ignorant of reality, that I am not in possession of a knowledge of the real; that is to be achieved by the present investigation. It may be that I have, as a matter of fact, an adequate knowledge of the real; but I am ignorant of such a possession. The result of this enquiry may well turn out to be the dragging out of this knowledge from its dark recesses to set it in the foreground of consciousness. The assumptions of the existence of a Reality and its knowability are sure to offend a zealous critic. Like the Sophist Gorgias, he may very ably prove that there is no Being, no Reality, and that it is unknowable, even if any being were accepted. The merits of such contentions apart, it is readily seen that the non-existence of any reality and its unknowability are not evident to us as they should be. Some ignorance or other is thus presupposed by all investigation. At the worst, I may be painfully disillusioned about my capacity to know the real. If this turns out to be the proper result of our enquiry, why should we refuse to accept it? We are not out to establish a pre-conceived theory; nor are we particularly solicitous to accept the verdict of common-sense.

Two things seem to have emerged so far: there is some ignorance, and it is absolutely destroyed. The first has saved our enquiry from being chimerical; there is at least myself who is ignorant of one of the things

already mentioned. The second gives promise that the investigation will prove fruitful.

Any new knowledge *partially* replaces, but does not wholly destroy the old; there is completion but no supplantation. This accords well with the doctrine that nothing is absolutely false or unreal. Plausibility, however, arises entirely out of the expression 'partially real'. It means either partly or incompletely, inchoately real. The gold-ore is partly gold, as some parts only are of sterling metal. Likewise, only some part of the previous knowledge is retained, while others are totally rejected. In the other case, an indefinite or imperfect concept yields place to a definite and more perfect one; here not even a part is retained—the two concepts being qualitatively different. Both of them cannot exist side by side; the emergence of the new and perfect concept is incompatible without the abolition of the other. Else, the person—the Hegelian—who holds the hypothesis 'that nothing is absolutely destroyed' should tolerate the opposed statement 'that something is absolutely destroyed'. To him both statements must be equally valid. By considering it so, he shall have nothing to maintain; his contention is nothing if it is not meant to contradict the other view that 'something is utterly unreal'. The Hegelian intends by his contention to reject entirely the thesis of the opponent; yet he would persist in maintaining that nothing is utterly false—a serious discrepancy between his profession and his practice. Resort will be had to equivocation by saying that the thesis of the opponent too contains an element of truth and so on. But the persistent question is which part is true and which is not. This is to begin the story over again.

With the rise of any knowledge, the absence of it before ceases to be a fact—this is but a truism. The mutual incompatibility of knowledge and ignorance is explicable, it is possible to hold, even if the latter were nothing more than mere privation of knowledge. This position might be acceptable, if in starting with this adventure in knowledge we started with a void behind us. It is not that we have made no judgments about Reality ere now; nor our attitude has been that of an impartial spectator. Aloofness or criticism is a learned and, very often, a difficult pose; it is born mostly out of the warring of opposed beliefs. When I see a thing, my heart is engaged fortwith. I do not hesitate, but take it to be real, and I proceed on that instinctive belief. On no other supposition can we explain the drive and the truth-claim of beliefs, illusions and dreams. To deny all this would be to ignore the most familiar and massive convictions. When the man in the street wends his way to the workshop day by day, eagerly discusses the latest news with his neighbours and makes provision for his family, he has a world-view, a metaphysics, whether he is conscious of it or not. His metaphysics may not be anything out of the ordinary; perhaps it is held in common by nine out of the ten persons that he meets. It does not on that account cease to be a metaphysical theory; for has he not judged about Reality? Descend as low as we can, we shall always find a set of beliefs held more or less coherently. At no time are they absent. Any knowledge emerges with such a world-view in the background, and receives its orientation through it. If the sceptic cannot find some beliefs in himself before he exercised his critical faculty, he will

never find them; nor can any one find them for him. We shall, however, take occasion to point out that he cannot be in a position to deny or doubt them even. Some datum is always presupposed before the conscious exercise of reason. It might be supposed that any conscious metaphysical enquiry will and should certify, rather than rectify, our beliefs—our implicit and unconscious metaphysics. This attitude is anything but philosophical. No enquiry, in that case, need be begun. If it is meant to supplement and complete existing beliefs, it is doubtful whether there shall be no change in our world-view consequent on the incoming of other beliefs. It is not a fact that we know where to accommodate the incoming beliefs without shuffling the old ones; this would mean that we know thoroughly what is to come. Any recourse to partial change etc. will lead us into difficulties already considered. The very least that any conscious employment of reason demands is that there shall be some change in our present world-view. There is thus a qualitative difference between knowledge and belief—the former being the self-conscious employment of reason through some avenues open to us; the latter is what is held implicity with little or no conscious justification. The difference is analogous to the distinction which Johnson in his *Logic* makes between the Proposition and the Judgment. The proposition is the assertum of which the judgments are so many conscious attitudes. Or, as he says:

"It would thus be more natural to speak of passing judgment upon a proposition proposed in thought than to identify judgment as such with the proposition......... There will thus be many fundamental attributes that

must be predicated of the judgment upon a proposition different from, and often diametrically opposed to, those attributes that are to be predicated of the proposition itself''.*

An enquiry into a state prior to a conscious attitude is attended with peculiar difficulties. By a conscious employment of reason alone can we investigate any matter; but then we are not left with any beliefs. Only the transition of one state into the other is open to us. And from this we have to presume and to hypothesise. Our conclusions, therefore, are hypothetical. Though undemonstrable, they claim, as a critique of experience, a deeper certainty and universality than the empirical. The Kantian Critique into the *a priori* factors of knowledge admittedly adopts such a hypothetical procedure. The only evidence that we can reasonably expect in such a situation is the showing that without such and such suppositions known facts cannot be explained; and that all other suppositions fail to do so. In adducing evidence for Ajñāna we shall unreservedly be having recourse to such a procedure.

We have indicated a legitimate and fruitful field of enquiry. Ignorance is not a particular object or the absence of knowledge; it should be identified with belief, with a state preceding, but terminated by, any conscious employment of reason. An enquiry about Ajñāna is therefore an investigation into the *a priori* conditions of experience. Such a thesis requires to be elaborated and

* *Logic*, vol. I, p. 2.

justified. A general and comprehensive theory has to be formulated.

Reference.—The "text" for the above section is the conception of Ignorance, universally held in Vedānta, as a positive (*bhāva*) beginningless entity destroyed by Knowledge.

Cf. *Citsukhī*, p. 57 :

"Anādi bhāvarūpaṃ yad vijñānena vilīyate,
Tad ajñānamiti prājñā lakṣaṇam sampracakṣate".

Also *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 544.

2

Theory of Illusion

Ajñāna was defined, in relation to knowledge, as belief that is cancelled by right cognition. More intrinsically, it is the material cause, the stuff of which illusions are made (*bhramopādāna*). This would entail on us, therefore, considerations about the nature of illusion and its cause. Vedānta which declares the world illusory knows but two ultimates—Brahman and Ajñāna. Neither is to be known directly by any empirical means of knowledge, but by the impilcation of experience. Any instance of illusion, as the stock-examples of Vedānta, 'rope-snake' and 'nacre-silver', will unmistakably reveal ignorance as its material. But for such instances, a theory of world-illusion could hardly have been suggested even as a possibility. An analysis of accepted cases of error should be undertaken in the interests of a general theory. And the chances of arriving at it, inducing it, are favourable if representative cases be chosen.

Illusions* are many and varied. The most obvious and undisputed instances are dreams and hallucinations. The distinction between the latter and illusions proper is not well-marked and is very often arbitrarily applied, though there is a certain unanimity regarding the meaning of the terms. 'Illusions are those false perceptions in which impressions made on the sense-organs play a lead-

* "Illusion" is here used in a very wide sense to denote all cases of error-perceptual or otherwise,—including dreams and hallucinations, and also in a more restricted sense to cover cases of misperception only.

ing part in determining the character of the percept', e.g., 'the rope-snake', 'nacre-silver' etc. "In hallucinations such impression is lacking or plays but a subsidiary part and has no obvious relation to the character of the false percept." It is not uncommon for persons to have distinctly 'heard' themselves called by name when none was near by; visual hallucinations, e.g., the confronting of a human figure etc., are notorious, and probably form the basis of 'ghosts'. Following Vedānta, we shall consider the 'rope-snake' and others as typical cases of illusion. In these, no stable medium (*upādhi*) is necessary to produce the illusory appearances; and when the rope is seen, the 'snake' vanishes for good. Other types of illusions are conditioned by some media, for instance, the mirror in producing the reflected image; the appearances there continue to be perceived even after their real character is known. Such, for instance, are the optical illusions of reflection and refraction, colour-illusions, illusions of size, distance etc. imperceptibly leading to what we usually consider as veridical perceptions.* Closer scrutiny will hardly justify the claims of most of these perceptions to be 'normal'; subjectivity is involved, to a very surprising extent, in the make-up of these normal perceptions. The 'normality' would seem to consist in the appearances being common to many percipients and in their persistence even after the

* Recent theories about "sensa" generally discuss such phenomena. Some philosophers advance the production-hypothesis to explain them; others advocate the selective theory. Cf. Broad's *Scientific Thought*, Part II, last chapters; Prof. Kemp Smith's *Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge*, chap. V, and Prof. Alexander's *Space Time*, vol. II, pp. 183 ff.

real state of affairs is known, unlike the 'rope-snake.' The reflection of my face in the mirror does not vanish though I know it as an image; bent stick does not get straightened inspite of my acquaintance with the laws of refraction. Such illusions are technically called *sopādhika,* in contrast to those which are not conditioned by any stable medium, *nirupādhika.* It will be found that the world-illusion is more akin to the former.

The above types are perceptual; we see elephants in dreams; the 'rope-snake' confronts us as an actual presentation; the reflected image is as much a visual object as the original face itself. There are non-perceptual illusions too. And to this category must belong all wrong opinions, 'convictions', faiths etc. These are by far the most massive and stubborn facts that constitute the main-spring of all action. What is common to all these varieties is that they ostensibly seem to give correct information and to acquaint us with real entities; later and closer scrutiny fails to validate their claim.

Our aim, in enumerating them, is not so much to classify illusions exhaustively as to get at the generic character exhibited in all of them. Exclusive attention to one type may result in our mistaking some specific characters present in that alone as applying to all equally. A consideration of several types guards effectively against any hasty and narrow generalisation.

The trend and interest of our enquiry into illusions is neither physical, nor psychological even. A conscious experience does not get explained when some unconscious question-begging entites or states are posited as conditions. The physical or physiological conditions are not self-evident, and are certainly more remote from

experience than the illusion itself. A tracing of the history of ideas leaves just where we were. Only an enquiry which avowedly essays to explain illusion in terms of experience and to adjudge its cognitive value and status can claim to be of any metaphysical interest.

As Ignorance has been defined as the cause of illusions, the issues that can be raised are:

I. What is the essence of an illusion?

II. Has it any cause? and

III. What is the ontological status of the illusory object? It is convenient to consider the first and the last issues together.

I. (*a*) Illusion, as conceived by Vedānta, is an identification (*adhyāsa, adhyāropa*) of the unreal with the real (*satyānṛta mithunī-karaṇam*).

(*b*) The identification is mutual (*itaretara*). It is inconceivable, if one term held aloof and were known separately. Though mutual, there is a vital difference between the identification of the unreal with the real and vice versa. The unreal is by its very nature (*svarūpataḥ*) super-imposed on the real; it does not exist even where it is supposed to do so. In contrast to this, only the relatedness (*saṃsarga*) of the real with the unreal is false.

(*c*) The identification itself is false, unreal—*mithyā*. Identification is the only relation that can subsist between the real and the unreal; the latter can confront us only by appearing *as* the real. The appearance of the unreal and its identification with the real are but one and the same fact. The unreality of the relation is a necessary implication of the unreality of one of the relata and vice versa. No real relation can subsist between the real and

the unreal. The unreal,* to define it tentatively, is 'that which is not to be found where it is presumed to exist', or 'that which is cancelled, contradicted in experience'. The experience of cancellation (*bādha*) carries with it a convincing certainty. Exactly opposite is the real; it is not only what is hitherto uncontradicted, but is the uncontradictable.

A consideration of some of the opposed theories about† the nature of error might be helpful in bringing out the significance of the Vedāntic contention. To assert that illusion is a wrong identification of the unreal with the real is to mean that it is analysable; every illusion must have a dual character, though initially it appears simple and unitary. Discrimination, analysis (*viveka*) is necessary to realise its composite nature.

(*i*) Error, to hold a diametrically opposite view, is an unanalysable surd, a hard fact; it is not an identification of the unreal with the real or *vice versa*. This process has to stop somewhere with the analysis into the real and the unreal; why not do so before? Our analysis, however, has this merit of showing that the unreal depends for its very existence on the real; and it is the real that serves as the basis for the illusion. On the hypothesis

* It may be expedient to restrict the use of the term 'unreal' to the utterly non-existent (*asat*) signified by such symbols as 'square-circle' 'son of a barren woman' etc., and the term 'Illusory' should be used for the false appearance. This distinction, however, will be made.

† It is universal with the Vedāntic writers to discuss and criticise the different Theories of Error (*Khyāti-vādas*) advocated by the several systems. Only four theories—the Asat Khyāti, Akhyāti (non-apprehension of difference), Anyathākhyāti and Ātmakhyāti—are noticed here. See *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 645 ff; *Citsukhī*, pp. 61 ff; *Vivaraṇa*, pp. 26 ff; and *Bhāmatī*, pp. 25 ff.

that error is unanalysable, both the real and the unreal would have to be conceived as indefinable co-ordinates. There is thus no point in calling one real and the other unreal. Both or neither of them shall have to be conceived as self-evident. In either case no distinction can be made between them. The difference might be supposed to consist in a qualitative mode, akin to that holding between 'red' and 'green'. A qualitative difference of this kind, however, favours only distinction, and does not serve as a ground for the rejection of the one or the other. On the Vedāntic contention, the unreal is intelligible as that which is dependent on the real for its existence, for its appearance even. There is thus no illusion without the unreal appearance and the real substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*).* Even the seemingly unitary 'I', the Ego, which is considered as the first illusion is, on analysis, found to be dual. It is constituted of the object and the subject (*idam anidaṃ rūpacaitanya*).

(*ii*) Identification is but a positivistic way of expressing the non-apprehension of the distinctness of separate entities cognised. The function of the mind is not to identify things that are separate; it is confined to selecting them. In the 'This is silver' the 'thisness' alone of the shell is picked up, while memory revives the sliver previously experienced. The two knowledges —Perception and Memory in the example chosen, are different, and so are their objects; neither of them is false. When the conch-shell is seen yellow, the yellow-

* The Mādhyamikas or Śūnyavādins are invariably represented as advocating the theory that illusions occur without any reality as basis (*nirdhiṣṭhāna-bhrama*).

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ness pertains to the jaundiced eye, but the form and size of the percept belong to the conch-shell. The distinction between the two acts of knowledge—two Perceptions in the second example—as well as the difference in their respective objects is not experienced. There is no super-imposition of one object of knowledge upon another, but merely a selection. This is the only way open to a Realist intent on safeguarding objects from being considered in any sense mind-dependent. As Alexander very precisely states it: "This leads us to a final point", says he, after pointing out that the relation of mind and object is one of compresence of two entities of dissimilar order, "which is of great importance. The plant selects from the soil; but the phosphates are already there, and it does not make them. Mind is equally a reaction to external things, and what it selects for its objects is present in the thing or in some other part of the universe"* His explanation of illusion is in conformity with the selective function assigned to the mind. "It will, then, I think", says he, "appear that real appearances are indeed selected by the subject but are really contained in the thing; that mere appearances arise from the failure to separate the thing from other things with which it is combined as apprehended; while illusory appearances arise from the introduction by the mind of new objects into the thing or, what in certain cases comes under the same heading, the omission of objects which belong to it".†

A sense of unreality haunts us in these endeavours

* *Space, Time & Deity*, vol. II, p. 105.

† *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 186.

to get rid of illusion. It is denied that identification is a conscious fact of experience; it is not even a datum; and yet attempts are made to analyse it away into distinct acts of knowledge having two real objects. The very least that is required for the possibility of such an analysis —the question of its validity apart—is that the identification, the illusion should be taken as a datum, as a proposition to start with. What appeared as an indivisible unitary object is, after analysis, found to be dual, composite. If nothing appeared, the analysis is chimerical. Moreover, if the analysis is to be valid, it must be affirmed that the elements—the two knowledges and their respective objects—are together identical with the illusion, with the apparently unitary object. This identity, however, cannot but remain for ever a matter of belief; it is not a given fact. One can always question the identification of a complex entity with two or more simple things in isolation. Thus, a relation of identification—an unprovable identity should be so termed—is posited by him who vehemently denies that identification is a fact of experience. If this were not accepted, we should have to forego all relations; for, to say that two or more things are related is to be able to assert that what can exist apart from this particular collocation are now together. Otherwise, the distinction of the relational whole into two or more terms is quite illegitimate. All relations rest on the position of identity between terms *in isolation* and *the same* in combination. If terms in isolation were different from those in combination or *vice versa,* it is a misnomer to call the combination a combination sustained by those terms. It should be treated as a unique fact.

(*iii*) To avoid all these, let us accept identification

as a necessary fact of the experience of illusion; how else can we discuss it, even to the extent of denying it? But it is a wrong identification of *two real objects* and not of the unreal with the real, as held by the Vedāntins. The work of the mind consists in wrongly bringing together the real objects that exist separately. A particular relation is unreal though the terms constituting it are real. The 'silver' is real and the nacre (shell) too is real, though the appearance of the shell *as* silver, i.e. the inherence of the 'silver' in the shell, is unreal. The image is a real object but its being mistaken for another, i.e. its assumed relationship with the face, is false.

The 'silver' that appeared in the illusion at the particular time has nothing to do with the real silver existing somewhere. It is not in keeping with the initial experience of the 'silver' as an immediate presentation to take it as a memory-object. We *re*cognize an object previously cognised; a feeling of familiarity about the object is indispensable for memory. The revived object is never a pure presentation; but the 'silver' is one. The cancelling judgment—'This is not silver'—does not, even by implication, establish real silver elsewhere. Cancellation only requires that real silver should not be here in the illusion; it is perfectly indifferent to the existence of silver elsewhere. If I have my eyes open, I can consciously perceive the absence of A in the room; to reach this conclusion it is not necessary for me to hunt him up and locate his existence in the universe; for aught, A may not be a real person at all. Moreover, we shall be leaving the plane of experience if we sought to relate, by way of identity or otherwise, the 'silver' with any entity not within the field of presentation. We

shall thereby be committing another error; for the relation in question, not being a presented fact, will always remain an assumption. The 'silver' that appeared here is entirely exhausted in its appearance; there is nothing dark about it; nothing lies underneath or above it. Its character and existence are identical with the appearance. To posit any hidden relation, to connect the appearance with any lurking entity, is the best way of getting into error.*

* In situations like the reflection in the mirror, colour-displacement as in the suffusion of the crystal with the redness of a flower etc., it might be thought that there is merely a confusion of two real things. The mistaken object being at hand, what happens is a little transposition, wrong localisation. The virtual image seen in the mirror is the real face in a slightly different place. But here too, it is evident that the appearance is different from the real; the reflected face in the mirror is not my face, for how can it be at two places at once; how can one and the same entity be the seer and the seen? (For a fuller discussion whether the Pratibimba is different from the Bimba or not, see *Siddhāntaleśa*, pp. 308ff (Chowkhambā Edition). The 'red' seen in the crystal is other than the redness of the flower, for they appear at different places. It is indeed held by some Vedāntins, e.g. the author of *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, that when the superimposed (Adhyasta) is at hand, Anyathākhyāti—the identification of two reals- should be adopted. He says:

"Yatra āropyam asannikṛṣṭam tatraiva prātibhāsikavastūtpatter aṅgīkārat; ata eva indriyasannikṛṣṭatayā japākusumagatalauhityasya sphaṭike bhānasambhavān na sphaṭike anirvacanīya-lauhityotpattiḥ." *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, p. 151.

Again "Āropya sannikarṣasthale sarvatra anyathākhyāter eva vyavasthāpanāt". p. 283.

This is by no means the accepted view; and the above author himself is alive to the fact that here too the appearance must be unique.

"Astu vā pratiyogimati tadabhāvabhramasthale, tadabhāvasya anirvacanīyatvam." *Ibid.*, p. 283.

The redness of the crystal is, accordnig to the accepted view anirvacanīya. See *Pañcapādikā*, p. 21: "Katham punaḥ sphaṭike lohitimanaḥ mithyātvam", etc.

(*iv*) Difficulties about the silver present elsewhere appearing here and now in this context to sustain a false relation with the shell are insuperable; no such obstacles are encountered in conceiving the 'silver' as but an idea projected out. Only the externality of the idea, the 'silver' appearing over there is false; and the cancelling judgment 'This is not silver' merely reinstates the subjective character of the idea. 'Silver' is not out-side but just within; it was never anywhere and anything else.

There is little evidence, however, to consider the 'silver' as in any sense mental, as an idea. The initial presentation of the 'silver' does not admittedly favour such a conception; the 'silver' appears to all intents as an object external to thought. The cancelling experience implies that the 'silver' is not real silver, that it is utterly unrelated to the real. The identity of the 'silver' with the idea-silver or a mental modification rests on no experiential basis. The spiritual function of intuiting or knowing is the only thing that is unequivocally mind or mental. The relation of the 'silver' with the mind or its modification by way of identity or otherwise cannot by any means be known. Such an assertion, to be valid, requires a knowledge of the togetherness of the mind or its modification with the 'silver'. This again necessitates that knowing itself should be made an object of knowledge. The 'silver', however closely scrutinised, does not betray any trace of its relationship with the subject, knowledge. It is in no way mental, because it is known as an object (dṛśya).

(*v*) All the alternatives, fairly exhaustive in themselves, being thus untenable the Vedāntic thesis has emerged unshaken. It is a simpler and less objection-

able hypothesis to hold that the appearance—'silver' is unique and underived (*anirvacanīya*). If some elements not present in the presented field were assigned as its constituents, we should have to posit a relation of identity between the 'silver' and its constituents—an identity that is unprovable. On this view alone are the illusory knowledge and its subsequent cancellation adequately explained. The illusion has for its object some entity that is actually present in the context. Unlike other theories, the 'silver' is neither explained away, nor is it assumed to exist elsewhere in some form other than that of its appearance. In the illusory knowledge, over and above the appearance—'silver' there is a suggestion, a beilef that it is real. Some relationship of the appearance with something not actually present is implicitly posited. *Bādha* or Cancellation repudiates all such unwarranted suggestions, unprovable relationships. It merely brings out the unique unrelated character of the appearance; the tacit identification of the appearance with the real is negated. The greatest mistake that we can commit is to take the appearance as the apperance *of* something. It is this seductive 'of' that has been responsible for the illusion.

We may profitably consider here in detail the status of the illusory object.* It is successively taken as real, then negated, and finally contemplated as unreal.

(*i*) To begin with, 'This is a snake' is, for all purposes, one indivisible presentation perfectly analogous

* I am indebted to Prof. K. C. Bhattacaryya's penetrating analysis of illusion contained in his paper "Śaṅkara's Doctrine of Māyā" published in the Proceedings of the 1st Session of the Indian Phil. Congress.

to any real percept of the same content. The relation of the 'this' to the 'snake' and *vice versa* is one of complete identity, so complete that there is no inkling that they have separate existences. The identity is not marked by any conscious effort to bring together two entities. This state may well be called the state of Illusion (adhyāsa); the 'snake' is real to all intents.

(*ii*) The second state is represented by a knowledge of the attendant circumstances expressed in the judgment 'This is but a rope'. Consequent and perhaps simultaneous with it is the judgment 'This is not a real snake'. The 'this' in both the statements as well as in the illusory knowledge stands for the unique presentation 'snake'. If we have grounds to think that some relevant circumstances have changed between the first presentation and the subsequent disillusionment, we shall not be in a position to assert 'this is but a rope' not 'a snake'; for before we could bring a light or return to the spot in daytime the real snake might have gone its way; the previous presentation might have been a real snake. The 'this' serves as a nexus between 'This is a snake' and 'This is but a rope'; both refer to the same subject. The latter judgment cancels, or negates the identity of the 'rope' with the 'snake', and consequently the identification of the 'snake' with the real ceases. And this is expressed, as though it were an independent judgment, in the form 'This snake is not a real snake'. In the contradiction-stage we seem to know the 'snake' as what it is not; it has nothing to do with the real—with the rope or the snake elsewhere. It is not true that the 'snake' was real when it was so apprehended, and became unreal later when cancelled. Its unreality, our

non-recognition of it notwithstanding, is unqualified by time. Cancellation must imply this.* A succession of ideas is necessary to pass from the state of illusion to that of contradiction; but time does not enter constitutively into the contents of the illusion or its cancellation. When we know the rope it is invariably coupled with the conviction that it has been always there in spite of our misperception.

(*iii*) For the practically minded all interest ceases with disappointment. A theoretical consideration about the status of the unreal object cannot be avoided by us. What is the unreal 'snake' that was till now confronting us? Can the contradiction involved in something being an object of thought though unreal be removed? Not real like the rope the 'snake' is not mere nothing, for the presentation, at least the memory of what was once vivid, still haunts us. A ready way out of the difficulty is suggested in taking the illusory object as a subjective fact. But the facthood of the latter is dependent on the tenability of the object, the content. After the disillusionment, we always refer to our perceiving the 'snake' in apologetic terms. As conscious agents now in possession of right knowledge—as Pramātṛ—it seems derogatory that we could ever have perceived the 'snake' at all. We begin to cast aspersions on the seeing even. The 'snake' is referred to as 'felt' to have been perceived; for we poignantly feel the difficulty of entertaining a percept

* *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 14, pratipannopādhau traikālika-niṣedha-pratiyogitvam mithyātvam.

without any pointable object. We cannot own nor disown it. It is not through any assignable empirical psychosis (*antaḥkaraṇa vṛtti*) that the 'snake' could have been seen; it was directly 'given' to the *Sākṣī*.

Nothing can be predicated of the illusory object e.g. the 'rope-snake'; nor can it serve as a predicate of any subject. Can we say that the 'snake' was of a particular colour and length, or that it was seen lying in such a direction etc.? All these characters are now definitely known to have belonged, even then, to the rope. Its temporal and spatial position is not its own. It is not possible to accomodate and fix its relative position amidst the empirical objects. The reflected image in the mirror has not any size, shape, colour etc. of its own, for they all belong to the original object or to the mirror (*upādhi*). These characters, the would-be predicates do not and cannot get related to the 'snake' or the virtual image; for they are not existent subjects. The illusory snake is not the subject of any proposition; can it be the predicate of any subject? This might be possible if its relation with anything, with any existent subject be provable. We know, on the contrary, that its supposed relationship with the real, with the rope is unwarranted. No real entity will accommodate within its bosom the illusory object. It is not the character *of* something.

As the 'snake' appeared *in* knowledge, the latter at least cannot prove inhospitable. The relation between the two, however, is not tenable. To validate the relation between knowledge and the appearance we should be in a position to know their togetherness, their compresence, thereby requiring knowledge to behave as an object. The illusory appearance, therefore, does not

get related to any entity. It cannot characterise anything; not can it be characterised. All attempts to express it in terms of others, to define it, and explain it causally or by way of identity through others have proved futile. It is not expressible in terms of others, being Anirvacanīya; not the subject or the predicate of any proposition, it is the utterly unrelated; it is what it is. Of the illusory all but purely tautological statements are false, inapplicable. That it *appeared* in knowledge is to say nothing intrinsic about it; its character and existence are entirely exhausted in the appearance (*pratibhāsamātrśarīratva*). The Vedāntic definition of the illusory (*mithyā*) is but a paraphrase of the reason given for its illusoriness; the world is illusory because it is given, because it is an object (*dṛśyatvāt, jaḍatvāt*). This can be expressed as a case of immediate inference—obversion; the 'given' is not the not-given, it is different from the not-given. Of the not-given, we can conceive only two types—the subject which knows but is not known and the utterly unreal, e.g., the son of a barren woman. As indubitable and independent, the subject is real while the other, about which no question of truth or falsity is suggested even, is utterly non-existent. The illusory because it is given as an object, because it is a character, cannot be either the real—Sat, or the utterly unreal—Asat. No contradiction or violation of the Excluded Middle is to be apprehended. For, the Asat is not conceived as the very negation of Sat, but as that which does not confront us as real. Had the Sat and the Asat been conceived as mutual contradictories e.g. the Sat as the uncontradictable, and the Asat as the contradicted, the acceptance of the one would have *ipso facto*

meant the rejection of the other and *vice-versa*.* The Anirvacanīya, thus, is and can be different from the not-given, from the Sat and the Asat (*sad asad vilakṣaṇa*). The unique, the unrelated can only thus be defined negatively by dissociating its alleged relationship with other categories.

It is thus seen that the only inherent character of the illusoriness of the 'snake' etc. consists in their appearing as the 'given' (*dṛśyatva*). This is equally and invariably present in those objects believed to be real. They also are as false as the accepted illusory object—Prātibhāsika. Ultimately therefore, the distinctions 'illusory' and the 'real' (*vyāvahārika*) seem to be based on nothing more than purely practical considerations. The distinction that the illusory *alone* is false (*mithyā*) is itself false—Mithyātvamithyātva.

As all phenomena are on a par with the 'snake' or the 'silver', the Vedāntic contention comes to mean that all expression of one thing in terms of others is false. Any explanation or relation is unwarranted. Vedāntism is one with Bradley in uncompromisingly declaring that a related view, 'one that moves on the cog-wheels of terms and relations', is false. In other words, that is false which is established by others, which depends on them. The self-evident (*svayaṃprakāśa*) alone is real.

The only difference between the illusory (*mithyā*) and the utterly nureal (*tuccha*) consists in the initial appearance of the former as real, in its pseudo-claim. There is a legitimate demand, when this claim is fonud hollow, to experience the illu-

* Cf. *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 50, 51.

sory, the unreal, as mere nothing or as absolutely identical with knowledge.* "The unreal, is 'given' in absolute mockery of thought"; and memory, however apologetically, testifies that the 'snake' was perceived. This bespeaks a deep subjective distemper which theoretical considerations seem powerless to appease.

Adhyāsa is thus best understood as an identification of the unreal with the real. It has already been pointed out that the relation is mutual† and is false. From the falsity of the relation it follows that all the terms constituting the relation are false. The 'silver' that appeared is false by its very nature; it has not even a semblance of existence apart from the shell where it appeared; what it is in itself apart from this connection cannot be determined. Its intrinsic nature is indescribable. The 'thisness' (*idaṃtā*) of the shell is also false, for it appeared not independently in its own right, but as identified with the 'silver'. The relatedness (*saṃsarga, tādātmya*) of the shell with the silver is therefore false; it is not justified by right knowledge. Not only is the reality of the virtual image (*pratibimba*) untenable but the relationship of the face as the original object of the reflection (*bimbatva*) is clearly not an intrinsic character of the face. We are in a position to make this distinction, as we do come across the nacre or the rope in their pure form without the illusory relation. Otherwise, there would have been no difference in the status of the shell and that of the 'silver'. The real, therefore, never appears in an

* Cf. Tucchā 'nirvacanīyā ca vāstavī cetyasau tridhā/
Jñeyā māyā tribhir bodhaiḥ śrauta-yauktika-laukikaiḥ//
Pañcadaśī, VI, 130.

† *Saṃkṣepa Śārīraka*, I. 34.

illusion, and conversely, whatever appears in an illusion is false. A distinction is therefore made between the *Ādhāra*—the 'this' which is connected with the illusory object 'silver' and the *Adhiṣṭhāna*, the real e.g. shell, a knowledge of which cancels the illusion, but which never appears in the illusion.* The *Ādhāra* or the 'this' serves as the nexus between the real and the unreal. It is only in this sense that the identification is said to be mutual; only thus can we escape the predicaments of both being real or unreal.†

As an application of this distinction in the nature of the Adhyāsa, we may mention that objective facts are illusory by their very nature, as they cannot be shown to have independent or dependent existence, while the subjective states are false because of their contact (*saṃsarga*) with objects. This is to say that the Spirit in its own nature has no states. Thus there seem to be only two classes of illusions—objective facts and subjective states.

Can we assign any cause for illusion? The question is not whether the illusory appearance e.g. the 'snake' has any cause, for we have already seen that it is unique and unrelated. To assign any cause for the appearance is not to take it as a mere appearance, as we should, but as the appearance *of* something. It is, however, legitimate and significant to ask why was the unique character of the appearance not known, even at the time of illusion, as it is done after its cancellation. It need not have been identified with the real. If the illusion were uncaused or had any cause other than the ignorance of the real, it

* *Saṃkṣepa Śārīraka*, I. 36 & 31: "Adhyastam eva parisphurati bhrameṣu", etc. etc.

† *Ibid.*, I. 32.

would prove permanent and, in no case, would cease on our attaining a knowledge of the real; and even if it did, it would be capricious. It is not necessary, in assigning ignorance as the cause of illusion, to leave the plane of experience; for we are accounting for it in terms of knowledge, in relation to the cancelling judgment.

The contention of the Vedānta is that in all illusion, Ignorance of the Real (the *adhiṣṭhāna*) is the only cause of the origin and sustenance of the illusion. This might be obviated by urging that other conditions too are necessary as causes, or that the whole plausibility lies in the ambiguity of the term 'Ignorance'.

An analysis of any illusion will give the following factors as involved therein:

(*i*) A privation of the knowledge of the true state of affairs; the real nature of the rope or the shell—the *Adhiṣṭhāna* is not known. This is indispensable, for a knowledge of the true state would not only put an end to the illusion any time, but would make it impossible from the very outset. Technically, this is the *Āvaraṇa*. There is thus a necessary connection between the illusion and the ignorance of the real.

(*ii*) This by itself is inadequate; then, there would result a mere blank. Something must also crop up, the 'silver' or the 'snake', so that its identification with the real be possible. The appearance of this unique factor is what gives a content, a character to the illusion, as the illusory perception of 'snake', 'silver' etc. This is the *Vikṣepa*. It is thought that mental traces operate, as in a case of memory, in the production of 'silver' or 'snake'. It may further be urged that these traces must have been left by a valid experience, and hence point to

a real silver. If I take my stand on the vantage ground of actual experience, the operation of the traces is not a fact to me at all; what I know immediately is the appearance 'silver'; that it is produced by traces is a retrospective belief based on the presentation—'silver'. This belief may or may not be true; the appearance, however, is indispensable if at all anything is to be taken for the real. Moreover, in order to see the reflection of my face in the mirror, or the stick bent in water, no previous traces are required; the appearance alone is necessary.

(*iii*) The thing misperceived e.g. the shell or the rope, the non-knowledge and knowledge of which allows and cancels the illusion, is an indispensable factor; else, nothing can be taken for the real. It may be that what I consider real may turn out to be unreal later; the rope need not be considered ultimate; for the time-being it is real and its existence is in no way less extensive* than that of the 'snake'. Because the real (the *adhiṣṭhāna*) lends itself to be misrepresented, it is sometimes taken as a cause. But no change is observable in it by the presence or absence of the 'snake'; the illusion does not touch it. It is the passive ground of the super-imposition, of the appearance, (*vivartādhiṣṭhāna*).

(*iv*) We have also to grant a consciousness which knows both the illusion and its cancellation, and which, therefore, to assert the least, must remain unchanged to that extent. Its connection with the illusion as causing

* *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 101: "Niṣedhasya bādhyatvaṃ pāramārthikasattvāvirodhitve na tantram, kin tu niṣedhyāpekṣayā anyūnasattākatvam".

the latter cannot be a matter of experience; for then knowledge shall have to make itself an object—i.e. cease to be knowledge. These factors alone are relevant for any illusion.

A knowledge of similarity (*sadṛśya-jñāna*), sense-contact and some defect (*doṣa*)—either in the sense-organ, as jaundice and squinting or some environmental defect as darkness, the refracting medium and distance, are also assigned as causes.* It is possible to maintain, with a show of plausibility, that in illusions like 'rope-snake' or 'shell-silver' the knowledge of similarity is operative. This, however, is not true of others e.g. the 'blueness of the sky' and 'the diminutive size of the perceived moon'.

Contact of the senses with the real objects is considered necessary in cases of perceptual illusion. The perceptibility of the illusory object is due to that of the real one. But this rule is violated in the illusion that the 'sky is blue, and glaringly so in dreams; for admittedly the sense-organs do not function in dreams. The only rule that we can frame is that in a perceptual illusion (*aparokṣa bhrama*) the ground of it must be immediately apprehended—whether through the sense or otherwise.†

It is more difficult to dispose of the claim that some defect—physical or physiological—is to be found in all cases of illusion. Darkness, for instance, is responsible for the mischief of the 'snake'; drowsiness or nervous excitation causes dreams. One defect may not be at the back of all illusion; some one or other is. But how am

* *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, I. 28, 30.

† *Ibid.*, I. 41, 42.

I to know that the presence of a certain factor, say darkness, engenders illusions or its removal cancels it, or in some way contributes to either? How is the causal efficiency of the defect in producing the illusion to be determined at all? To know that a particular knowledge is caused by some factor, I must consciously experience a state when it was absent and the factor alone was present. Besides, the necessary connection of the factor with knowledge must also be known. I may know darkness, but darkness as *conditioning* the illusory presentation of 'snake' I do not know.

The assigning of material conditions for the production of knowledge e.g. the contact of the senses with objects or their activity, is a popular but a thoroughly wrong view of things. What I actually *see* are the objects about me; that I am seeing *through* the eye is not a datum to me. I may subsequently come to *see the eye* either in a mirror or internally—leaving alone the difficulties on this view—but never the seeing *through* the eye. To conclude, we cannot determine that knowledge is engendered by objective conditions—physical or physiological—as it is impossible to get at the back of knowledge.

The same criticism might have applied with equal force against ignorance being the cause of illusion, but for a vital difference. When I come to have a knowledge of the rope I can at the same time say, without leaving the vantage ground of experience, that I was not having a knowledge of it before. It is immediately patent that the illusion falls away consequent on my knowledge of the rope. It is legitimate to conclude that my previous non-possession of this knowledge was the cause of the

illusion, all other conditions being equal. A knowledge of the rope is the only factor newly introduced; and it comes to us with the consciousness that it was not present before. This is evident from the almost reproachful tones in which we accuse ourselves—'I could have known that this was a rope'.

All this is eminently satisfied, it might be urged, if in the actual stage of illusion i.e. before its cancellation there were merely an absence of the knowledge of the rope; we need not have recourse to a positive ignorance of the rope. Here we have to draw a distinction between a factual absence of knowledge and a knowledge of its absence. The latter we could not have had, for to have a conscious knowledge of absence we should have to bring the absent entity before our mind, and consciously perceive its absence in a presented field. If we had such a knowledge we could not have been *ignorant* of the rope; the illusion could not have started even. To escape such a predicament, the other alternative of a factual absence of the knowledge of the rope accompanying the knowledge of the 'snake' may be tried, but in vain. This is tantamount to accepting an unknown and unknowable fact—which Vedānta cannot entertain for a moment. Admission of any unknowable entity is nothing short of a veiled materialism. Nothing can be asserted which is not experienecd.

On the hypothesis of a positive ignorance which shrouds, like darkness, the rope from view in the stage of illusion, we are not expilcitly aware of our ignorance then. But an experience of it is necessary for our later and more explicit recognition. The whole scheme of ignorance rests on the cessation of illusion consciously

experienced, on something, without an assignable beginning, coming to a termination consequent on our knowing the real.

The foregoing discussion would not be in vain if it has made our notions of illusion as a mutual identification of the real and the unreal and of the status of the illusory object clearer. The later portion was devoted to showing that illusions are made of the stuff of ignorance, and cease when it is removed by a knowledge of the real. The world (*prapañca*) is considered as the modification of a primordial ignorance (*mūlājñāna*), and that it is of the nature of a super-imposition, an identification of the unreal with the real. Our interest, therefore, is to know the Reality the ignorance of which constitutes the stuff of the world. This would be to demand evidence both for the Reality and its Ajñāna.

3

Evidence for Ajñāna

Ajñāna is asserted by Vedānta as the cause of the world-illusion; the concept of causality is applicable only when the cause can be shown to exist, logically at least, prior to its effect. Ignorance, if it is deemed to be the cause of the empirical world, should exist and be known apart from it. Such a claim necessitates, therefore, a consciousness to apprehend ignorance. Besides, we should also be told how and in which specific state such an apprehension is possible.

Actual perception, Inference, Implication (*Arthāpatti*) and Scriptual testimony are the kinds of evidences usually adduced to prove Ajñāna.* Of perceptual or direct evidence three modes are mentioned. Two are explicit avowals of ignorance—viz., 'I do not know myself and others' and 'I do not grasp what you mean', and the third is the remembrance of ignorance directly experienced in sleep. All these, as pointed out before, refer to a direct apprehension of ignorance by a consciousness other than the empirical. The arguments have much in common and can be expounded as a critique of knowledge.

The function of knowledge is to reveal the object, to make us acquainted with it. All other suppositions are self-contradictory. To consider a few divergent but

* The most complete and coherent statement of the evidences is to be found in *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 548-74. Cf. also *Vivaraṇa*, pp. 12 ff. and *Citsukhī*, pp. 58 ff.

representative views about the character of knowledge. It may be viewed as constituting, distorting or copying the objects. Are these assertions compatible with the knowledge of these assertions? By knowledge constituting the objects the least that could be meant is that the two are coincident both in extent and duration. How can such a knowledge know itself as constituting the object, as *ex hypothesi*, it is one with the object and does not extend before or after it? In the last resort some knowledge must be credited with the awareness of the coincidence of knowledge and its object. It cannot be said that that knowledge too is coincident with its object, for this see-saw shall never end. We shall never be in a position to validate the statement.

Knowledge is a distorting medium or that it 'copies' the objects—it may be said. To assert these, we must have known the objects in themselves, first as not distorted or as the originals and then, what is more difficult, know these very objects as distorted or copied by knowledge. The mutual contradiction is very patent.

Moreover, these assertions are assertions about knowledge as well. Let us suppose that knowledge, instead of simply revealing, changes, constitutes or distorts the object. For aught this may be so. But how do we know the function of knowledge to be such and not otherwise? *Ex hypothesi*, the second knowledge may change its object, viz., the first knowledge. And this means that the conception of knowledge as anything but simply revelatory would cut at the root of that assertion. All these assertions, be it noted, require knowledge to be presented as an object and assume an absolute, though unprovable, identity between know-

ledge as knowing and the same as subsequently presented. The identity itself must be considered still another object. These contentions are assumptions to bolster up faulty theories.

We have been considering knowledge as an entity existing by itself, inviting thereby all troubles—it may be pointed out. It is but a resultant of the environment and the organism—a spark that flies as at the clash of flint and steel. It is by this spark, however, that we can descry and survey the alleged causes. The origination of knowledge has to be established by knowledge. This knowledge further could not have been conditioned in any way. Likewise, knowledge cannot be proved to exist *in* anything as a character, nor can it be property *of* an agent different from it. The 'in' and the 'of' cannot be validated. Knowledge exists in its own right and shines by its own light. If we conceive Reality as that which exists and is known in itself, knowledge is indisputably such an entity. And this can be said of no other. Never an object, it is always immediately and indubitably luminant.* That which illumines others cannot itself be shrouded in darkness. This is indispensable to make the least assertion right or wrong, even this assertion that there is no knowledge, or that it is an object.†

On the search-light theory of consciousness the illumination of objects by knowledge is explicable. There is however this difficulty that knowledge cannot know itself as knowing, as revealing; 'knowing' itself is not

* This is the Vedāntic conception of Svayamprakāśa. *Citsukhī*, p. 9.

† *Sambandha Vārttika*, 874; *Br. Up. Vārttika*, IV. iii. 156.

an object. The assertion does require that we should know 'knowing.' Moreover, if the knowledge-function were invariable and continuous, it can never know itself as revealing. I cannot suspect that I know any object if I have been knowing it invariably and ever. This theory too does not seem to escape the fate of others.

When we know either by perception, by inference or by any other means of knowledge an object, it is always coupled with the consciousness that the specific means of knowledge (*Pramāṇa vṛtti*) acquaints us with something not known* (ajñāta) before in that specific way. The incoming knowledge breaks in upon us as a modification of a dim background. If this position be not acceptable, the object will either be *always known* without any specific functioning of knowledge, or be *always unknown* in spite of such a functioning—neither of which is tenable, or even plausible.†

'Knownness' or 'unknownness' is not an objective characteristic—a mark which every object invariably carries with it. If we were confined to one object, the distinctions of 'known' and 'unknown' would never have arisen. If they were objective characteristics, they should be known with the thing and by all persons indifferently. We shall not be wrong if we take 'knownness' or 'unknownness' as relational properties or relations born out of a contrast between two states. If this is conceded, we should further grant that the two termini of a relation must be known before the relation is known.

* "Avijñātārtha-gantṛṇi pramāṇānīti vādinām; sarveṣām abhyupetorthaḥ kuto'sāviti cintyate". *Br. Up. Vār.* I, iv, 221.

† *Sambandha Vārttika*, 685, 687, 689.

The 'unknown' has therefore to be apprehended in some way prior to the rise of the specific source of knowledge—Perception, Inference etc. None of these sources of knowledge is in a position to give us an apprehension of the prior 'unknownness' of its object; each is confined to the actually present. A conscious experience prior to the rise of any specific knowledge (*pramāṇavṛtti*) has to be accepted. And to this consciousness Ajñāna is 'given' immediately without the help of any empirical psychosis.

Attempts to explain, in some other ways, the situation immediately preceding any specific knowledge may appear plausible. 'I was not knowing the table before' can be taken as a transcription of the negative implication of 'I know the table now,' or it may be merely an expression of the factual absence of this very knowledge before its rise (*prāgabhāva*), or even as the presence of some other particular knowledge discrete and disconnected with the succeeding one.

The last alternative, advocating momentariness of consciousness, is palpably untenable. As each state is discrete, it cannot take cognisance of another's presence or absence, precedence or succession, or its own presence or absence. Its character as knowledge, as knowing anything, can hardly be made out, for no distinction is possible between Knowledge and Object. The momentariness of consciousness is incompatible with this assertion, with the knowledge of momentariness. A present state emerges with the content 'momentariness of consciousness' contained in it—it might be said. But it is evident that 'momentariness of consciousness' is merely the content of a new state, of one state; it is not asserted

of all states. This is to say that no generalisation is possible—leaving alone the tenability or otherwise of any existent objective universal. The feeling 'I was not knowing this before' is least susceptible of explanation on this hypothesis.

Prior to the rise of any specific knowledge, a factual absence of that knowledge exists; 'I was not knowing this before' is but an expression of such an absence—it may be averred, as is done, by the Naiyāyika. We should begin by demanding evidence for the assertion about the absence of knowledge. It is not possible to have a perceptual knowledge of the *absence of all knowledge* (*jñāna-sāmānyābhāva*), for this very knowledge about absence will militate against it. Nor is it possible to have a perception of the absence of a particular knowledge (*jñāna-viśeṣābhāva*) e.g. 'the knowledge of the table.' To negate a thing or to perceive its absence, it has first to be brought within consciousness, to be imagined or remembered. And this from the nature of the case is impossible; if the knowledge of the table whose absence is to be perceived is brought within consciousness, how can we assert, in the same breath, its absence? The pre-non-existence of knowledge may be proved through inference, through a universal of the form 'All knowledge is preceded by its previous absence.' But this is question-begging. An attempt will be made to establish this universal by bringing it under a wider one, by pointing out that 'all effect as such is preceded by its pre-non-existence,' else the effect would not have a beginning to time. That knowledge is an effect can be ascertained only by actually perceiving its emergence preceded by its absence; and the absence of knowledge is sought to be

proved on the ground of its being an effect—a veritable vicious circle.* The tenet that every effect is preceded by its absence (*prāgabhāva*)† is also assailable.

The hypothesis of a negative implication too fares no better. By negative implication we should mean that on the strength of a *known* incompatibility of two or more entities we draw certain consequences. If A is known to go always with C and the latter is available invariably in the absence of B, then we should be right in inferring from A to non-B or vice versa. Implication is thus a line traced among *known and relevant* entities. A knowledge of the table acquaints me with the particular object, but cannot by itself say anything about its non-perception before or after. We have thus to fall back upon a known absence of this knowledge, and all that has been urged against the previous view will apply here too. An acceptance of a pure undifferentiated consciousness without any objective presentation will hardly improve matters; such a consciousness is present invariably, even now; yet the 'unknownness' is not a present fact.

To explain the now known character of any object or its previous unknownness, we have to appeal to a consciousness, to some objective experience other and more primordial than the several empirical modes of cognition. Such a consciousness did not and could not know the absence of the empirical modes of cognition explicitly during their non-emergence, yet that is implied in our knowing the absence later on. "One who is born blind has not consciousness of not seeing. But if such a

* Certain other arguments special to sleep-experience are dealt in sec. 4.

† Prāgabhāva has been finally disposed of in *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 551 ff. and *Advaitadīpikā*.

man comes to see, like Cheselden's patient, he will have an explicit perception of the previous absence of seeing which will at the same time be *re*cognition of the absence as that implicitly cognized during the absence".*

Can we assign any determinate content as constituting that primordial experience? If we do, then it is not in any way different from the empirical modes of cognition. If the table were already known determinately before its perception, how can it be said to have been previously unknown. If no determinate content is assigned, in what way can an identity be established between the same object 'unknown' before and 'known' after? As every determinate cognition is claimed to be a recognition, it must be shown that the cognition and its recognition refer to the same object. We have instances of such an indeterminate recognition even on the empirical level. Left in a dark unfamiliar room with little or no light, darkness alone is known. Subsequently, when light is brought in, we not only perceive the things in the room, as darkness rolls away, but recognise them as having been there enveloped by darkness. The identity of the objects previously known but as 'unknown' and the same in full light cannot reasonably be doubted, unless we know for certain that there has been some tampering in the meanwhile. From this example, it is also evident that darkness is seen immediately, without the help of any light, as an object;† light is required to see other objects, but only the light of consciousness is necessary to see Ajñāna. Also, the seeing of darkness stands in the way of other objects being

* Prof. Bhattacharyya's *Studies in Vedantism*, p. 8.

† Ajñāna is therefore always known by the Sākṣi immediately, and not

seen; darkness comes between objects and the perceiver. The rôle of Ajñāna is similarly to cover that which should have been patent and to make it seem non-existent.*

In the recognitive knowledge 'I was not knowing this table before' all the known empirical characters should be excised away to get at the primary apprehension. The past tense 'was' is clearly seen to be a hybrid born of collating two experiences; when the object of memory is experienced it is always a present fact, the pastness is due to *our* position in a later state. We have already seen that the definite content 'table' also could not have been known before. Nor can a form like 'I do not know this' be a true transcription of that experience. There cannot be any conscious non-perception (*anupalabdhi*) at that level. A primary acquaintence with something set against consciousness without the apperception 'that I know this' would answer the case. What is given is the bare duality of the subject and the object; the subject is exercising its purely spiritual function of intuiting and the object is a bare 'homogeneous mass'.

All this comes to mean that thought presupposes the distinction between the knower and the known. A conscious exercise of reason does not usher in duality *ab initio;* it can nevertheless question the distincton. What has been implicity held need not be thought unquestionable, self-evident. Akin with this is the

by the Pramātṛ, not through any empirical vṛtti. As it has been well said "He who essays to apprehend Ajñāna through Knowledge, the great fool, verily does but endeavour (fruitlessly) to perceive darkness with a powerful light". *Siddhānta-muktāvalī*, p. 125.

* Āvaraṇakṛtya. "Nāsti, na prakāśate, iti vyavahārāpādanam". *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 587.

objection that Ajñāna, if 'given' as an object to any consciousness—Sākṣi or Pramātṛ—, would cease to be illusory. Starting with the experience of the Ego of which we took as an instance, 'I was not knowing this before', we perceive that this can be explained only on the hypothesis of a more primal objective experience of a consciousness other than the empirical. The Ego, accustomed to handling determinate objects, can express the homogeneous indeterminate experience of the Sākṣi only negatively; the empirical determinations are not to be found in the experience of the Sākṣi. Both the experiences, however, stand or fall together. The knowledge of the Sākṣi is not more sacrosanct, more valid than that of the Ego; it is notorious, on the contrary, that the evidence of the Sākṣi is very unreliable,* because he does not, being impartial, make any attempt at sifting the matter presented to him. We must be 'given' everything, however indeterminately, before we can exercise our critical faculty. The 'givenness' does not amount to accepting it as valid. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent Ajñāna from being 'given' and being false at once. It is said to be primordial and beginningless; however further and deeper we carry the critique of knowledge, we shall always find the belief in an object distinct from the knowing of it. We should call this 'belief', for no attempt, before our conscious questioning of it, was made to ascertain the validity of such distinction. Every activity of ours, including the specific cognitive functions, assumes such a duality. With the belief in objectivity, difference is ushered in; what is in its own

* "Sākṣi-jñānasya satyāsatyaviṣayatayā, prāmāṇyāniyamād aprāmāṇyoktiḥ sāmpradāyikānām. *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, p. 135.

nature infinite—Akhaṇḍa—becomes bifurcated into the knower and the known (Khaṇḍita), however incipient and unobtrusive the distinction be.

If such an object, a general sense of objectivity, is to be considered as ignorance, it should satisfy both the definitions stated before. A conscious exercise of reason, right knowledge must cancel it; secondly, it is to be the material cause, the stuff of all illusions.

Every specific knowledge arises as the modification of a primal blank known by the non-empirical consciousness; the emergence of the specific knowledge is coincident with the cessation of the 'unknownness' of its object. The very form—'I was not knowing this before'—in which such knowledge is couched, the pastness of the unknown, is a sufficient indication that it is transcended by knowledge.* It must however be accepted that any specific empirical knolwedge—Vṛtti—is able, only to a very limited extent, to remove unknownness, externality. We should, if our contention is to be fully validated, point to some knowledge which cancels completely all ignorance. Such an experience is to be had in the identity of the self with Brahman in the *akhaṇḍārthāvṛtti*.† Nothing is left unknown; reality is not external to the apprehending thought. The possibility of such an all-embracing experience shall have to be shown. We can however urge theoretical considerations to prove the untenability of the belief in objectivity, in the difference between subject and object.

* *Sambandhavārttika*, 181.

Avidyāyā avidyātve idam eva tu lakṣaṇaṃ
Mānāghātāsahiṣṇutvam asādhāraṇam iṣyate.

† Infra : Sec. 7.

The general trend of the argument may be indicated, leaving a fuller treatment to be taken up later. The existence of the object—ignorance in this case—can be proved only if its distinction from the subject or knowledge were made out. And this from the very nature of the case cannot be evidenced. The difference between the two is itself not an object. To apprehend the distinction, the subject has to be made an object; this is clearly illegitimate. Accepting the objectification of the subject, we have further to assert the absolute identity of the objectified subject with the knowing subject. This identity shall always remain problematic, questionable. Again, even if the difference were an object of knowledge, its distinction from that very knowledge shall have to be evidenced, and so on. Such are the anomalies and prevarications that we are led into by trying to uphold the difference.

As the relation between subject and object is unreal, not existent, it will jeopardise the being of the terms. If there is no difference between the two, they will collapse into one. The object is nought, and therefore, the connection of the subject with it, i.e. subjecthood (*sākṣitva*) is also false. From the unreality of a relation the unreality of the terms comprising the relation should follow; this was established as a corollary in the previous section.*

We have tried to show in a general way, why ignorance itself should be considered false, and how it is the cause of all phenomena. In the following sections a two-fold task will be attempted; firstly, to show in detail that subjective and objective facts are but derivatives of

* Supra p. 141.

the primordial belief in the existence of the object, i.e. in a duality; and secondly, to prove that they are false. This would justify why ignorance is termed Mūlājñāna, root of the world-illusion.

It may be found useful to sum up the considerations urged so far.

(*i*) Any definite knowledge of the Ego presupposes ignorance, the general but unproved existence of the object presented to a consciousness other than the Ego.

(*ii*) By a critique into the state prior to any Vṛtti-jñāna—empirical psychosis—, we have been able to ascertain that the spiritual function of the spirit consists in mere intuition, in revealing and illuminating what is presented. The spirit, we also saw, illumines the unreal objects as well; otherwise, the illusory cannot be the topic of our discussion. It does not therefore reject or choose, and hence cannot relate. So constituted, it does not know itself as knowing.

(*iii*) The Ego—Pramātṛ is hostile to ignorance; he chooses and rejects. We have thus to make a distinction between consciousness which does not apperceive, but merely intuits—the Sākṣi—and the Ego which relates and apperceives.

(*iv*) At no time is the object outside consciousness. Everything is illumined by the Sākṣi either as 'known' or as 'unknown' (*Sarvaṃ jñātatayā, ajñātatayā vā sākṣi caitanyasya viṣayaḥ*).

Reference.—The importance of 'Ajñātatā' 'unknownness' known by the Sākṣi was recognised very early in Vedānta. We find Sureśvarācārya recurring to this topic several times.

1. *Sambandhavārttika*, 686-99.
2. *Ibid.*, 987 ff.
3. *Br. Up. Vārttika*, I. iv. 221 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, IV. iii. 156 ff.

See also *Saṃkṣepaśārīrika*, II. 8 ff.

4

Falsity of Subjective Facts

Idealists in the West, while rejecting external objects, have invariably evinced an inconsistent partiality towards subjective facts—ideas, volitions, emotions and the like. Plurality and change in the physical realm have been denied, often with great vehemence; but history or spiritual evolution has always found unquestioned approbation. Berkeley and even Hume felt constrained to admit succession and association of ideas, while rejecting causation and substance. The Neo-Idealistic school of Croce and Gentile is but following the established tradition in the West in exalting history and spiritual evolution over natural events. All this is due to a confused conception of the spirit and the spiritual. An abolition of the 'outer circle' leads logically to the dissolution of the inner as well; once assail objective facts, subjective facts too crumble away, conditioned as they are by the former. This is the contention of Vedānta.

A subjective fact can, with least violence to common usage, be defined as that which is not shared in common by conscious entities, as objects are. The word that best symbolises the object is 'this'—Idam or Yuṣmad. When I hear a song or see a flower, the song or the flower is common property, while the hearing or the seeing is peculiarly mine. A thought-content though not pointable as an outer object is still communicable through concepts and universals; but the thinking is private and unique. Volitions and Feelings are admittedly subjective. What the Ego—the 'I'—appropriates indisputably is a

subjective fact. The body is on the border line; both 'this is my body' and 'I am stout' etc. are fairly common, and are representative of the privileged position of the body. It sets a convenient limit between the subjective and the objective. Thus defined, the subjective seems clearly to involve the notions of 'internal' and 'external'; the former is the subjective, while the latter is the objective. But the external too is not altogether external; within knowledge alone are these distinctions significant. The Ego is readily seen to identify itself with a portion of the known field, making it thereby internal.

This tacit admission of outer objects smacks of a realistic bias. There is nothing like the external; all is equally within. The distinction between the external and the internal, however useful in practical life, is bereft of any speculative value. The Solipsist can, and does very cogently deny outer objects, even other minds. But any solipsism that is not a solipsism of the present moment is logically contemptible. Confined to a moment, the distinction of the knower and the known is untenable and does not arise. We cannot speak of the diversity of ideas, their succession and association. The 'I' must go into the melting pot. Such an attitude is welcome. It is a legitimate, though most difficult pose —one that has to be cherished and cultivated. It consists in a persistent refusal to believe in anything other than the immediately given. Beliefs, however, are always creeping in, beilefs in the existence of physical substances, in other minds and in oneself at other times. He would be dishonest, if the sceptic did not admit the presence of such beliefs in him. Some beliefs are primordial and comprehensive, others derived and less

pervasive. A hierarchy—at least a sequence—logical or causal, is traceable in them. Whether subjective facts are acepted or not, a legitimate and fruitful field for a theoretical exercise does exist. When the Vedānta derives the world—the Ego included—from ignorance, it claims to do nothing else than trace the cosmological history of beliefs. It is to be pointed out how the entire phenomenal show is an unwarranted super-imposition of unreal characters on the pure spirit. The question that should naturally suggest itself to us is whether the so-called states of the self do really pertain to it. Issues that can be raised are: What are the states? Who knows them? And whose are they?

Spirit is the light which illumines things and makes them actual. It is intuition, the attention that is necessary if things are to be known, but which is never, except figuratively, turned upon itself. It is not, therefore, a theme of disbelief or doubt. Spirit neither generates anything nor is itself generated. Generation is incompatible with the nature of spirit, unity and actuality. For, spirit must not only generate but know that it has done so. The generated becomes an object of intuition and not the intuition itself. An identity—which by the nature of the case is unprovable—has to be posited between intuition and its object. Again, any genuine generation militates against the actuality of the spirit; from it something must emanate which was not before; and nothing is latent in spirit. If anything were hidden in the bosom of the spirit before its actual production, spirit could have known that then too, and as known, as an object, the generated is certainly different from the spirit. If the latter does not know it, none else can; there is no evidence

for the latency, for the generation. Matter alone can generate. Spirit does not select either; it does not determine what things are to be presented to it. Any selection presupposes a desired pattern according to which something is chosen and others are rejected. Spirit does not stand for any 'content'; it cannot, therefore, select. Besides, to exercise a choice both the desired and the undesired, the chosen and the rejected require to be known by consciousness; the latter does not rule out *ab initio* the undesired. Otherwise, there would be no choice.

Can the Spirit have states? Can it pass through them? A state is a stage, a phase that is transcended, something that emerges and lapses. A temporal passage is clearly involved in the concept of a state. If there were no object, or there existed only one homogeneous object, no state is possible. Diversity of states is possible only through the diversity of objects experienced. If at any time the spirit is pure, it follows there cannot be any state.

The states usually considered in Vedānta are the three well-known ones—Waking, Dreaming and Sleep; the 'fourth' Turīya is sometimes added. The waking phase is not one unitary state, but a series of states characterised by same common features. The body-consciousness is scarcely, if ever, absent. This imposes a ready and automatic distinction between the internal and the external, between mere ideas and real things. The world of action is taken as the real. The 'I', the Ego is the controlling consciousness of this phase. The Dream-state is marked by an escape from the tyranny of the body and by greater freedom from the limitation of space and time. The objects are indeed the traces

(*vāsanā*) of the waking-experience, but the utmost latitude is enjoyed in their combination and sequence. Many of the dreams are surprisingly coherent. It is not unusual to find ourselves in dreams arguing fairly sequentially. We perform sometimes the well-nigh impossible task of finding arguments for the opponent as well as disproving them. The dream-state shows, as nothing else does so eminently, that mere consistency and coherence will not guarantee existence. Even with the absence of outer objects, the illuminating function of the spirit is unimpaired, showing unmistakably thereby that space, time and other empirical categories are accidental to knowing.*

The Sleep-state (*suṣupti*) is of the utmost importance in the Advaitic system, as showing both the spirit and Ajñāna—the two ultimates of Vedānta—in their pristine, unmodified form. The Vedāntic thesis is that sleep is not a state of utter void; there is evidence not only for the existence of the spirit but also of a positive object, though undifferentiated and indeterminate. Its significance rightly understood, sleep should serve as the start-

* As dreams are illusory (prātibhāsika) we should know which is the basis (adhiṣṭhāna) of dreams and which is the consciousness that dreams (kalpaka). The latter is readily seen to the 'I' overpowered by torpor (nidropapluta). About the Adhiṣṭhāna there is controversy; some hold that the 'I' or the waking consciousness is the Adhiṣṭhāna; for on waking up, as the real basis of the illusion is known, dreams are cancelled. This is untenable, for the 'I', the waking consciousness, is not present in dreams. It is therefore generally accepted that the undifferentiated consciousness is the Adhiṣṭhāna. On waking up there is technically no cancellation, no *bādha*, as the Adhiṣṭhāna continues to be unknown. There is however a cessation, a removal (nivṛtti) of dreams; the waking state is hostile to the continuance of dreams. See *Siddhāntaleśa*, pp. 332 ff (Chowkhamba ed.); *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*, pp. 145 ff.

ing point for the explanation of the empirical world and of experience. Objectivity here is attenuated and stripped of all empirical variety; it lapses into a homogeneous mass—the very womb of all genesis. With the unflagging and unintermittent light of the Spirit we have followed the object in all its vicissitudes and have traced the world-stream to its source. If the objects had any common origin at all, it must be sought not in any particular object of the waking life; for, being a determinate itself, it cannot, without flagrant incongruity, be the ground of other and varied determinate entities. It is not open to us to posit an unknown and unknowable indeterminate merely on theoretical grounds. Inference or implication is possible only with known terms. To admit *known matter* is not materialism, but to accept *unknown matter* is. The indeterminate, if it is deemed the cause of the world, must be given in some experience. We have evidence of its being so given in sleep from such memory-judgments as: 'I was not knowing any thing,' 'I slept soundly, happily' etc. Considerations that conclusively prove these as memory have much in common with those urged in the previous section. Only the special features need mention here.

Two other opposed hypotheses may be held to explain Sleep-consciousness. One is the classical position of the Nyāya,* which conceives the self (*Ātman*) as a non-intelligent substance with transitory knowledge as its special quality (*kṣaṇikaviśeṣaguṇa*). The *Ātman* exists in sleep, though knowledge does not; and the factual absence of knowledge then has to be inferred. To state the inference in a formal

* *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 556 ff.

way: The *Ātman* in sleep was characterised by an absence of knowledge (*jñānābhāva-vān*), as there were no means of knowledge at hand (*jñāna--sāmgryabhāvāt*). Or, if it had had any knowledge then, that would certainly be remembered now; there should not be an invariable and utter absence of any memory (*niyamenāsmaryamāṇatvāt*). All the terms used in the syllogism are open to question. The minor term (*pakṣa*), the *Ātman* during sleep, is not an existent; its existence can be vouchsafed only by knowledge, and that is not present. The lack of the means of knowledge, used as one of the middle terms, can be known only through an absence of knowledge and *vice versa*—creating thus a vicious circle. A conscious perception of the absence of knowledge is unacceptable for the reasons already adduced.* It may be urged that the paucity of the means of knowledge is to be inferred from the non-functioning of the sense-organs, including the inner sense, *manas*, during sleep (*indriyoparama*). And this latter is to be proved from the felt refreshedness of the senses after sleep (*indriya-prasāda*). This however may be due to other reasons as well, say the enjoyment of bliss in sleep. Moreover, we can demand evidence for the connection between the freshness of the senses and their non-functioning; and this can be substantiated only by a direct experience which knows them both. The other reason given, viz., the invariable non-remembrance of any sleep-experience, is inconclusive. To make it rigorous, the middle term has to be amended as 'not remembering experiences pertaining to the sleep-state etc.'; to frame such a rule we must know the state in itself and this, *ex-hypothesi*, is denied to the Nyāya. The paucity of any determinate memory is intelligible, as no specific object is

* Supra, Section 3.

experienced in sleep; the general nature of the remembrance of an indefinite object encountered in sleep has already been indicated.

The other hypothesis accepts that the self is eternally luminous; but does not grant any positive objective experience in sleep; for no tenable evidence, it is pointed out, is forthcoming for the existence of an indeterminate entity called *Mūlājñāna*. Whatever exists and is known is an object determinate and determined as 'this' or 'that.' 'I was not knowing anything in sleep' can well be explained as the negative implication of my knowledge after sleep. In the sleep state, the Self is pure and undefiled by any contact with objects. Sleep is different from the Brāhmic state or Mukti only in this, that it is followed, accidently, by states of wakefulness etc. In itself there is nothing to distinguish Suṣupti from the fully liberated state.

The objection against *Mūlājñāna* is really based on the contention that only determinate objects can exist and be conceived. The nerve of the argument consists in the rigour of the 'only.' 'Only' clearly signifies exclusion. What is the *other* from which the determinate is excluded. If there is no other, the 'only' becomes positively useless and misleading. The indeterminate is a conceptual entity, not a real one—it may be advanced. This, however, is to misunderstand utterly what is meant by 'known by the Spirit' (*sākṣi -bhāṣya*); with the *Sākṣi* the principle seems to be *concipi is esse*. Before anything can be pronounced illusory, doubted, negated or excluded, it has first to be brought within thought. Only Spirit which does not choose or reject can entertain all objects. The determinate can have its being and be conceived as determinate, only when it is opposed to the indeterminate and known in contrast to it.

In a case of memory the object previously experienced and subsequently remembered is identical in character; here the object of the original experience is said to be positive (*bhāva-rūpa*); the memory, in glaring inconsistency, takes a negative form 'I was *not* knowing anything.' This serious discrepancy militates against the admission of any positive ignorance. It must however be accepted that the memory-object is not necessarily identical with that of the original experience. For one thing, the time-element imported in memory is entirely new, besides the setting and quality of other experimental factors being different in both the cases. The identity of the remembered object with the experienced one must always remain a matter of belief; we can verify the identity only by an appeal to another memory and so on. Some common character that accounts for the feeling of familiarity is available here too. How else can the Ego express an indeterminate object, that is neither positively nor negatively determinate, except by negating all determinations? It is not by accident, as it will be shown presently, that sleep is followed by other states; an inner necessity guides the sequence.

We may conclude that it is a simpler and more plausible hypothesis that 'I was not knowing anything in sleep' is a case of memory referring to an objective experience. Because of the presence of an object, can sleep be a state of the self. This is the view of the author of the *Vivaraṇa* and that of others following him. According to him in the judgment "I was not knowing anything' (*na kiñcid avediṣam*), 'I slept happily' (*sukham aham asvāpsam*), there is remembrance (*parāmarśa*) with regard to three things only-Consciousness, Ajñāna and Bliss.* The 'I' (*aham*) is an empirical addition,

* Tataśca suṣupatau anubhūta Ānandaḥ, Ātmā, Bhāva rūpam Ajñānaṃ

for the 'I' alone knows the states explicitly by remembrance; all apperception is invariably expressed self-consciously.* The absence of any specific knowledge (*jñānābhāva*) and of pain (*duḥkhābhāva*) are to be inferred from the presence of positive Ajñāna and Bliss respectively, there being a known incompatibility between ignorance and specific knowledge† A serious difficulty that confronts this view is the unavailability of mental traces (*saṃskāra*) for memory. The experience of the *Sākṣi* being permanent and invariable, and Ajñāna too continuing as before throughout, even on waking up, nothing lapses, and no trace is generated. Such is the objection raised by Sureśvarācārya in his famous couplet:††

ca trayam apyutthitena parāmṛśyate, "Sukham aham asvāpasaṃ", "Na kiñcid avediṣam" iti. Nanv etat trayaṃ suṣuptau nāntaḥkaraṇavṛttibhir anubhūyate, tāsāṃ tatrābhāvāt etc. *Vivaraṇaprameyasaṃgraha*, p. 60.

* *Vivaraṇa*, p. 56. Tasmān na bhoktṛtayā 'py ahamullekho 'nusmaryate.

Vivaraṇaprameyasaṃgraha, p. 61. Nanv etāvatā ahaṃkāre kim āyātam. Idam āyātam; na suṣuptāv ahaṃkāro 'nubhūyate, nāpy utthitena parāmṛśyat iti.

Kā tarhi 'sukham aham iti' parāmarśagatasya ahamullekhasya gatiḥ. Eṣā gatiḥ. Suṣuptau vilīno 'haṃkāraḥ prabodhe punar utpadyate, sa cotpannaḥ parāmṛśyamānam ātmānam savikalpakatvena spaṣṭavyavahārāya upalakṣayati, etad ekaprayojanatvād ahaṃkāravṛtteḥ. Ata eva ātmā kadācid api nānyābhir antaḥ-karaṇavṛttibhir vyavahriyate.

Taduktaṃ Naiṣkarmyasiddhau :

Pratyaktvād atisūkṣmatvād ātmadṛṣṭyanuśīlanāt,
Ato vṛttīr vihāyānyā hy ahaṃvṛttyopalakṣyate,
Ātmabhāvāvinābhāvam atha vā vilayaṃ vrajet,
Na tu pakṣāntaraṃ yāyād ataś cāhaṃdhiyocyate.

† *Vivaraṇa*, p. 56-57. Nanu utthitasya duḥkhābhāvaparāmarśo vidyate, sa kathaṃ pratiyogijñānābhāvād anubhūtaḥ parāmṛśyate. Ucyate. Anubhūtam eva sukham utthitasya anusmaryamāṇaṃ tatra duḥkhābhāvam arthāpattyā gamayati. Tasmāt, viśiṣṭājñānasukhānubhavānupapattigamyau jñānābhāvaduḥkhābhāvāv iti mantavyam.

†† *Br. Up. Vārttika*, I. iv. 300-301. Na suṣuptagavijñānaṃ nājñāsiṣam

"The experience in sleep 'I did not know this' is not remembrance. As no interval of time etc. lapses, what is invariably with the self (*ātmastham*) cannot be a past event." "The self does not touch the past, nor is it seen embracing the future."

There is nothing, however, to prevent us from considering the experience of Ajñāna and Bliss as due to the relation of consciousness with a *state of Ajñāna*, which comes to an end with the rise of any specific mode of knowledge. Hence, such an experience, though not empirical, is still not invariable, as its object—a state of Ajñāna—ceases to be on waking up. Mental traces (*saṃskāra*) to engender remembrance are thus possible.*

It is not by accident that sleep is followed by the waking phase; an inherent necessity governs the succession. The very rise of the Ego is conditioned by the experience of the *Sākṣi*, and with the rise of the Ego the empirical world is ushered into being. An investigation into the relation of the states is identical with the enquiry about the knower of the states. Incidentally, we shall also be furnishing evidence for the contention that ignorance experienced by the *Sākṣi* in sleep is the cause of the world-illusion.

iti smṛtiḥ, kālādyavyavadhānatvān na hy ātmastham atītabhāk. Na bhūtakālaspṛk Pratyaṅ na cāgāmispṛg īkṣyate, svārthadeśaḥ parārtho 'rtho vikalpas tena sa smṛtaḥ.

* *Vivaraṇa*, p. 57. The author himself raises the objection and answers it, see also *Viv. Pram. Saṃgraha*, p. 60. "Avidyaivoktatrayagrāhaka-vṛttitrayākāreṇa suṣuptau vivartate".

Even the Vārttikakāra accepts an objective experience in sleep when he says:

"Na ced anubhavavyāptiḥ suṣuptasyābhyupeyate,
Nāvediṣam suṣupte 'ham iti dhīḥ kiṃ balād bhavet".

A consciousness confined to one state cannot know any state *as* a state; for it is identical, nay identified, with the state in extent and duration. The Ego, if by that we understand the 'I' present in waking life, therefore, cannot know any state. A person stationed at one point but bereft of a knowledge of the surrounding space cannot *locate* his position; he cannot even know it as a point, a fixed position. Similar is the case with regard to a consciousness of time; and all our knowledge is invariably tinged with a time-sequence. We have perforce to appeal to a consciousness which is continuous and knows all the states and transcends them. But a consciousness which knows all states impartially, as the *Sākṣi* does, cannot know any state as a state. To do so, it has to contrast and relate the states by identifying itself now with one state, now with another. A consciousness to which everything is an immediate and present picture cannot admittedly do this. A spectator who does not identify himself with a point, with a particular position in space cannot make divisions in space relative to that or to any point. Everything will be utterly homogeneous and undifferentiated. *Mutatis mutandis,* all these considerations apply to temporal divisions, causal sequence, substance etc., in short, to any relational mode of cognition. The *Sākṣi* knows only terms, and even then, not as terms in a relation, but as essences in their intrinsic character.

We seem to be faced with an impasse; the Ego, confined as he is to one state, cannot know the states, not even the waking phase; the *Sākṣi* is equally powerless, as he knows everything wholly, impartially and unrelatedly. A consciousness which is at once transcen-

dent and limited appears at first sight incongruous. Facts, however, demand such an entity. The Ego (*Pramātṛ*) has tacitly to appropriate the experience of the *Sākṣi* if he is to relate and know the states. Technically, the Ego—'I' is super-imposed (*adhyasta*) in the *Sākṣi*. A knowledge of the whole or the continuum is indispensable before distinctions and divisions can be made *in* it or *of* it. The Ego identifies himself with a *portion* of the field known in its entirety by the *Sākṣi*. He takes a position in the landscape, and makes that the centre whence he surveys the field. Consequently, he enjoys the advantages and drawbacks of that particular post. Such an identification with a particular perspective, with a peculiar station in life, is wholly irrational and foreign to the impartial and infinite nature of spirit. It is only Spirit, be it observed, that can do this. In themselves, all the points of space are equally central, equally peripheral; no preference can be made out for any one of them. Spirit, by identifying itself with a particular position, however irrational this may be, can make it the centre and the rest the outlying parts. The very presence of matter is sufficient to call forth spirit. Before the ego can be brought into being, there must be change and commotion in the primordial homogeneous matter—Ignorance— presented to the *Sākṣi*. A *Vṛtti*—mental modification—arises dispelling the gloom in however small a degree; a small portion of the field is lighted, according to the nature of the *Vṛtti*, and set against the rest of the vast dark back-ground. Spirit identifies itself with this tiny lighted portion, becoming thereby the Ego. Such a limited consciousness will view everything from that peculiar standpoint of the mental modification. The experience of the *Sākṣi* is viewed, as

'unknown' in contrast to its own, which is known; in contrast to the lighted portion of the field with which the Ego is identified, thanks to the *Vṛtti*, the rest of the field is dark, 'unknown'.

From the alternation of the 'known' and the 'unknown' spring all contrasts, all relational modes of cognition. The relation of the known with the 'unknown' is thus the exemplar of all relations. Attribute is the character that is actually present, known; substance, not being itself a character, is 'unknown', is believed in some sense to be beneath the several attributes imparting a unity to them. When the cause, the ground, is in the focus of consciousness, the consequence is distant, is 'unknown', and when the latter is reached, the ground has already dropped out of consciousness; it is 'unknown'. The relation of the remembered object to the original is typical and patent. Without alternation, without a temporal sequence, there can be no relating, no relation. The categories must be shown to be constituted in the transition from Sākṣihood to Egoity. This will at the same time show unmistakably the make-up of the Ego as a composite product. Objective characteristics have entered its very soul: hence it is termed the 'this-not-this consciousness'.*

Nothing is external to the Sākṣi; all, including Ajñāna, is immediately present. The object is barely apprehended, not apperceived; the distinction of subject and object is not consciously felt. The Ego arises with the distinctions in the objective. For him a good lot is

* Idam anidaṃ rūpaś cetanaḥ. *Bhāmati*, p. 39, 45, *Vivaraṇa*, p. 49. *Pañcapādikā*, p. 17.

external, a small fringe alone being immediately present and appropriated by him. At no time is the externality absent. The very quest for truth implies the existence of an object, as an ideal to which the mental content tries to conform. This externality is sought to be bridged in cognition through interpretation and memory, in action through motion. From the admitted externality of object to thought, it follows that the thought object has parts, and these parts are external to one another. Any appearance —what is immediately present to thought—is interpreted as belonging to, or inhering in, something else, in substance not actually within the field of intuition. There is thus no object of the Ego without this diffusion of centre and outlying parts. Substance has parts and constitutes a physical space. Inversely, what has no parts cannot be external to thought. Pure Being (*Brahman*) which is simple and unitary is not external to thought; it is one with the latter.

The distinction of parts in the object involves the belief in its existence at different moments. If in attending to one part the rest were totally out of consciousness, or were thought to lapse, no apprehension of *parts* will arise; the attended is not a part of any existent. Not only is fluctuation of attention on the part of the observer implied, but the various parts successively surveyed must be thought to exist in all the moments of the survey. When I call an entity identical with, or similar to, the one perceived earlier, I posit unawares the validity of memory. A temporal sequence is implied in this primary memory. An all-embracing and unflagging attention cannot make any temporal distinctions. Spirit must be wedded to an *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the stable mechanism which stores up the

traces of experience; it directs and reflects the light of the spirit in restricted but clear-cut grooves. All these distinctions and divisions, limitations, arise within a whole continuous presented field. An experience of the *object as a whole* in the totality is the necessary *a priori* condition of there being the consciousness of parts etc. The experience of the *Sākṣi* is thus logically prior to that of the Ego. It may sound paradoxical, but it is warranted by the considerations already urged, that in knowing the states, in knowing anything relatedly, both omniscience and limitation are inter-twined. The Ego has to ground itself upon the Sākṣi; it is wrongly identified with the latter; without the Sākṣi no ego is possible; the former however continues invariably whatever vicissitudes may overtake the latter.* The 'I' is thus a conditioned product; it is called the first illusion.† In surveying the intuited field alternately, now from one point and now from another, in going to and fro, memory is indispensable. The Ego cannot be a mere passing state, but it is fairly stable. The stability of the Ego is but the stability of the instrument (*antaḥ-karaṇa*); the efficiency or otherwise of the latter characterises the ego. Eternal and timeless being of spirit becomes a duration in time; the infinite by becoming the ego acquires 'a local habitation and a name;' it is subject to the limitation of time, space and other egos and matter.

If the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is the very constituent of the ego, the body is a quasi-permanent adjunct. With the

* The superimposed, the illusory, is less extensive than the real ground of the illusion. *Saṃkṣepaśārīraka*, I, 27: Adhyastam alpa vapuḥ.

† "Ahamiti tāvat prathamo adhyāsaḥ" *Pañcapādikā*, p. 5.

help of the body alone are the further appropriations—'me' and 'mine' possible. 'Me' is the tangible bodily form in which we appear to others and to ourselves; 'mine' caters to our rapacious instinct for possession. It is not necessary to pursue the chain of identification and appropriation any further. Whatever comes in the way is pressed into service, is appropriated; but this appropriation has to be paid for. With the accretion and decrease of the possessions, the self feels—appears to feel—happy or otherwise. Enough has been said to validate the contention that all the later modifications—the Ego included—arise as limitations of a primary undifferentiated continuum; at each stage spirit identifies itself with objective facts.

Whose are the states? To essay an answer to the question we must determine the relation of the states to the self. This requires both of them to be presented simultaneously. The Ego (the *Pramātṛ*), confined as he is to one state, cannot own the states, even the waking phase. The possessor should be more extensive and enjoy an existence that is not entirely taken up by the possessed; the distinction between them cannot otherwise be made. The *Sākṣi* does extend over all the states; he knows their emergence and cessation—the sucecssion of one state by another. Impartial to and unaffected by the coming and going of states, he is not the owner; he does not identify himself with any or all the states. To assign any possession to the pure self, it is necessary, as already shown, for it to behave as an object. The states must belong to some intelligent being, to consciousness; the latter, however, is incapable of sustaining any real relation with them.

To conclude:

1. Subjective facts are hybrids sprung from the illegitimate union of spirit with objects. By itself, spirit has no states; there is no state without an object being present, without an identification with some object. Some *Upādhi* or other is always to be had in these states. Difference in the states is traceable to difference in the *Upādhis*. In the waking phase, the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is the *Upādhi*, in dreams the same in a subtler and attenuated form, while in sleep only ignorance—undifferentiated and homogeneous—is present. In virtue of a relation (*saṃsarga, tādātmya*) with these, the pure spirit becomes successively the Sākṣi, the dreamer and the Ego (*Pramātṛ*); all these objective accretions are foreign to spirit.

2. Where there is no object there is no state. The *Turīya*, the highest ecstatic state, therefore, is not a state of the self; it is the self itself, for no assignable object is present. A state we defined as the phase that is transcended, passed over; the self cannot pass out of its own nature.

3. There can be any number of Egos, as any number of *upādhis* (=*antaḥ-karaṇas*) to condition them are available. Their distinction too is tenable. The Sākṣi however is one; the nature of his *upādhi*—ignorance—is such that no difference can be made in it.*

4. The experience of the whole, as furnished by the *Sākṣi*, is indispensable for a knowledge of the parts, for relations. For the functioning of the Ego, the *Sākṣi* is necessary; the converse, however, is not true.

* See Section 6.

5. Though the experience of the *Sākṣi* is drawn upon heavily and invariably, it is only as Egos that we can know the states as states; the existence of the *Sākṣi* itself is known explicitly only by the Ego.

5

Illusoriness of Objectivity

"Object is what is meant," what is comprehensively expressible as 'this' (Idam). It is the content of knowledge. The most obtrusive objectivity is encountered in sense-perception; in the higher psychical states, in concepts, in images and the like, it is found in a subtler and less tangible form. Objectivity is present wherever there is scope for doubt or any liability to err. Though not amounting, in any sense, to a strict definition of the object, this may help us to identify and describe it. Subjective facts, we saw in the previous section, are constituted by the relation of the Spirit with the objects; they are relational properties. We could decide their untenability on the incompatibility of any relation between the two. The Spirit has, thus, no states. A consideration of the status of the object, kept in abeyance so long, has to be taken in hand.

What is meant by the illusoriness or reality of the Object? It is readily seen that the reality of the object cannot be constituted by its being *known*. Any statement, in that case, will be valid; the 'rope-snake' will cease to be illusory. The distinctions 'true' and 'false' will vanish, for even the palpably false is known. The question therefore resolves itself into an examination of the claim of the object to exist as an independent or dependent reality. If the object were independently real—as it is universally believed to be—it should enjoy an existence other than that of the subject or knowledge.

To assert this is to assert the distinction or difference of the object from the subject. Objectivity is thus bound up with the tenability of differences, especially the subject-object difference. The Vedāntic contention about the illusoriness of objectivity shall require the showing, in the first instance, that objectivity is bound up with differences, and secondly, that they are untenable.

All conceivable differences can be brought under two heads :

(i) the difference of the object from the subject or knowledge;

(ii) and the differences in the objective i.e. differences of objects from one another.

A third kind may be sought to be foisted upon us by contrasting either the subject or the object with the unknowable. The difference between the known and the unknown, however, is itself a difference in the objective, as the unknown is in some way known. If it is utterly unknown, its relation to the known is also unknowable, is not significant. We are thus left with only two differences. And these are interconnected in such a way that the abolition of the one by necessity leads to that of the other. Based on these and assuming their validity are the several sciences and the disciplines of Logic and Epistemology.

The difference between knowledge and object is pre-supposed in all differences between objects themselves. All objects, *qua* objects, have to be different from knowledge, whatever other characteristics they may possess or not. To cognize determinate objective differences, it is necessary that objects should be distin-

guished from knowledge; only then, can they be compared in one plane of existence and their differences noted. This is well expressed by saying that differents (e.g. A and B) are also different from knowledge; neither of them is identical with knowledge. If at least one of them were identical with knowledge, its difference from the other cannot be evidenced; for no act of cognition performs the impossible feat of knowing the object and at once knowing that as different from itself. Unless objects were different from knowledge, they cannot be differents to each other. It also follows that the difference of A from B or vice versa is not on a par with their difference from knowledge. For, the latter difference is common to them both, while the former is based upon their possessing a specific nature as A or B. The difference of object from knowledge may be considered the first act in the drama of objectivity.

The discipline that is concerned with objects in general is Epistemology. The problem for it is: "what are the pervasive features, if any, of all objects irrespective of their differences;" it has to do with the *a priori*. Epistemology takes for granted the facthood of objectivity, though the existence of particular objects is a matter of indifference to it. It is in the fitness of things, therefore, that Kant should have had recourse to the thing-in-itself. His purpose was not to question objectivity but to establish the *a priori* as opposed to the empirical. This may not be the accepted conception of Epistemology, but it will be admitted that there is a scope for such a limited enquiry.

When once the object has come into its own by being sufficiently distinguished from knowledge, it

is found convenient to drop all reference to knowledge, and adopt a purely objective attitude. Differences in the objective are of two grades:

(i) the difference between the indeterminate and its determinations, e.g. the difference that subsists between the subject and the predicate in a judgment; and

(ii) the differences between two or more determinate objects.

In Logic, we seem to be engaged with the first, with the determination of the indeterminate. Johnson's distinction between the Proposition and the Judgment is analogous to what is said here. The proposition may not be available, or be known in isolation, yet a difference ought to be made between it and the various attitudes—affirming, questioning, doubting and denying—that we take about it. How else can all the attitudes be referable to one and the same theme? "It would thus be more natural to speak of passing judgments upon a proposition proposed in thought than to identify judgment with the proposition". It is possible however to have more than one Logic, because the relation between the indefinite and its determinations i.e. between the subject and its predicates may be variously conceived. It has been taken as one of identity (*tādātmya*) or difference or both. Difference is of course necessary in any view, but identity may be thought more ultimate, as providing the ground for the differences.* It is conceivable that the relation between the two—the indefinite and its determi-

* This might be taken as the Hegelian Theory of Judgment, by no means, unknown in Indian Philosophy. The Sāṃkhya and the Bhedā-bheda Vedāntic doctrine prevalent before Śaṃkara are instances of the view.

nation—is indefinite; it is equally open to us to regard the relation as difference, or identity or both etc.†

The indefinite need not figure in our Logic; the subject stands for one determinate and the predicate for another; they are somehow indissolubly connected; and this makes the predicate relevant to the subject.* A fourth way is to regard the two—subject and predicate—as disparate and utterly unconnected; they are thought to be together, conventionally or as a matter of convenience. This would be to adopt the radically empirical standpoint.**

The relative merits of these various theories of judgment do not concern us. The purpose of all of them is to provide a transition from the subjective to the objective realm, to the realm of science and everyday life. Logic shows the way by which objects get determined. Certain characters, the given essences are taken hold of and are asserted as belonging to certain others or as invariably going with them. This serves to distinguish both the character and the substance from others; we can thereby recur to them when needed. If none of the predicates that is ascribed to the indeterminate—the subject—were thought relevant, there shall be nothing to distinguish it from knowledge. It continues to be so distinguished, as it is thought capable of being determined; the possibility is never consciously denied.

† The Jaina theory of Anekānta Vāda or Pluralistic Indeterminism advocates this theory of Judgment.

* This seems to be the common sense standpoint, so admirably represented by our Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika System.

** The Humian and in a better sense the Buddhistic position corresponds to this theory of Judgment.

Some particular object or predicate may be doubted, denied even; but belief in objectivity continues unless the very basis of it is negated. It is vital, therefore, that the indeterminate should own some or any of the determinations ascribed to it. The bare distinction of the object from knowledge, presupposed by Epistemology, is maintainable, only if the object gets further differentiated into the character and the characterised etc. Logic is thus on the one hand a justification of Epistemology, and on the other it is the starting point for the Sciences.

It is never justified or questioned by Science that things are determinate, and that they act and react in a definitely assignable manner. Its function is to observe the several reactions of determinate bodies in the physical and biological realms, and to codify and generalise the observations for future use. Scientific procedure, it might be held, proves—but does not assume—that things are determinate etc. Things are determinate and different from one another, because different bodies react differently in identical circumstances, or the same object under different conditions reacts differently. Little reflection is needed, however, to see that Sciences deal with determinate objects, for how else can they *vary* the conditions, if the conditions themselves were not determinate enough to be isolated and substituted. The dictum that every body acts in a specific way under specific conditions is not proved, but is taken a priori.

The two disciplines—Epstemology and Logic and the Sciences, in short, any enquiry that has to do with objects, proceed on the assumption that the aforesaid differences are facts; at best, they are taken as postulates. It is not the province of Science or Logic to validate or to

question them. Only a self-conscious discipline—metaphysics—can deal satisfactorily with these assumptions. Being self-conscious, it questions the very basis of objectivity, and its verdict is final.

The three differences mentioned above being connected, it should be possible, by refuting one, to refute others as well. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find philosophers questioning causality and other categories of Science, leading thereby to an undermining of other disciplines. Our procedure would be to show the untenability of the evidences adduced to substantiate difference.

To take determinate differences in the objective. Sense-perception, it is held universally, acquaints us not only with particular things but with their specific differences from one another.† Difference shall have to be conecived as a quality of things or their very constituent. If a quality, the difference, like a universal, will be present in all differents in an identical form. The very purpose of difference is defeated. The position is far from being improved when it is said that the 'difference of the chair and others' qualifies the table or constitutes it. Each entity, then, would prove a miniature universe, a monad containing all things in the world as its accidents.* Seeing a thing, we should be absolutely certain and determinate about its difference from others; incidentally, we would be spared the labour of acquiring knowledge by acquainting ourselves with many objects.

It seems more natural to regard difference as a relation, though 'given' in perception. Difficulties on this view too are no less insuperable. No relation, from the

† Cf. *Citsukhī*, p. 164.

* *Ibid.*, p. 166.

nature of the case, can be given. It would then cease to be a relation, leading thereby to a non-distinction of term and relation or to an infinite regress. To know that A is different from B, I should have known what is B in itself before I can make it the terminus (the *pratiyogin*) of the difference. When B is given, therefore, its difference from A is not given and vice versa. The position is hardly improved by urging that the relation is given in two or more successive acts of perception or in their transition. Why the second or other successive perceptions should be the favoured ones it is not very intelligible. The second perception, like the first or any other, gives us a picture, acquaints us with the same or a slightly different term. The given object does not afford any information that it is different or identical with the previous ones, or with others. A creature living from moment to moment would not know relations; if they were 'given', as terms are, such a creature too should know them. The transition from one state to another is not an unconscious fact of experience; and however dexterous we may be in catching ourselves, we shall never come across a movement. To reiterate Plato's dictum, "Essences are definite and thinkable; existence or flux is indefinite and only endured". Relation, when contemplated, becomes a static picture, a term.

The validity of relation rests upon the validity of the identity of terms in isolation and the same in relation. To assert that two or more things sustain a relation of difference, similarity, inherence or even simple contact, we should be in a position to assert that the terms existing by themselves apart from the relation in question are identical with those occurring in the relation. If A

and B were invariably together, neither of them being available without the other, their distinction as terms in the related whole, is not tenable and would not arise; the relation would not be a relation sustained by terms, but a unique, unanalysable fact. The existence of at least one of the terms apart from the relation being indispensable, it is readily seen that an identity between its occurrence in isolation and that in this collocation shall have further to be granted; else two occurrences would ipso facto mean two discrete terms. The identity, however, is unprovable, is not immediately given. The two occurrences cannot be given together; when the one is 'given', the other is not present. To rely on memory for the identity is to rely on a flimsy reed. Memory itself implicitly posits the validity of the identity of the remembered with the experienced object. Occurrences in different contexts, at different times, do not change the essence of a term, it might be said. This, however, is not susceptible of proof, as it begs the question. Even the so-called organic relations do not escape criticism. The distinction of parts in an organic whole is based either on the imagined availability of the parts apart from the relation, or on the implicit position of identity of some parts in one organism with those of others, where the parts occur in isolation or with very dissimilar parts. An unproved identity is an identification, a false super-imposition.

Relations are thus not given; pure terms too are not given. Only in the midst of relations do the terms get a setting, an orientation, all their rich meaning and suggestiveness. It is equally true, therefore, to assert that terms are or are not constituted by the relations.

That they are not so constituted is proved beyond any doubt by the fact that something must be given unconditionally in itself as an essence, before it can be related with others. A firm footing is necessary before leaping. Though this is true of the given term e.g., the quality, the other term of the relation—the substance is not given, but is entirely constituted by the relation. Moreover, what is the given character of a term apart from the halo of the relations in the midst of which they occur, we cannot ascertain to any appreciable extent. A method, if our assertion about the falsity of relations is valid, to get at the 'given' by eliminating all suggestions and beliefs has to be suggested.*

The pretensions of the other sources of knowledge, inference etc., to establish determinate differences are very poor; one and all of them assume the existence of such differences. The most plausible attempt to establish universal difference has been made by the Buddhistic theory of momentariness, and also to a certain extent by the Leibnitzian formula of the "Identity of the Indiscernibles". The Buddhist employs the following ingenious argument:† Whatever exists is momentary and therefore unique; the permanent is the unreal, the non-existent, like the sky-lotus; the efficient alone is real. Anything that is efficient (*samartha*) is so at once or never, for why should the efficient wait; if it does, if it is to depend on others to produce the effect, it is certainly not the efficient. From this it can be inferred that the "seed in the granary (*kusūlastham bījam*) is different from the seed sprouting in the field; for the one is effi-

*Infra : Section 7.

† *Citsukhī*, p. 206.

cient in producing the sprout, which the other is not. If the two were considered one, we will be violating the dictum: "What is invested with two or more mutually opposed characters is not one" (*yo asau viruddha-dharmādhyāsavān na asau ekaḥ*); the seed would at once be efficient and inefficient. An extension of this reasoning would prove universal difference.

To decide the mutual opposition of two or more characters and their incompatibility in characterizing one entity, it is necessary to know that they are different. The requisite difference itself cannot be arrived at by this very argument, or by any other without involving a vicious circle.* We have to fall back upon the perception of difference; and this is to begin the story over again.

Of the difference between the indeterminate and its determinations, between the subject and its predicates, the crucial difficulty is the utter lack of evidence for asserting that the subject accepts all or any of the predicates ascribed to it. The relation itself is not given. It is palpably wrong to consider the subject not as indeterminate but as determinate, as a character in itself; each character being what it is, none can be said to be in another, or be predicable of another. The indeterminate, though initially and uncritically it is taken as a subject, of which some characters are predicable, is nought when all predicates, actual or possible, are found inapplicable. It is now definitely found to be unrelated, illusory. It is not the subject or the predicate of any proposition.

* *Citsukhī*, p. 210.

The subject-object difference is more fundamental and is the least questioned. It is beyond any reasonable doubt that knowledge is not known either by itself or by others. It exists in its own right and shines by its own light. The difference of the object from it is not tenable. There is no object which carries with itself any mark that it is different from the knowledge of it. A knowledge of object is not a knowledge of its difference from the object or vice versa.† Nor is the difference given as the object of any special knowledge; even if it were, that special object will not be evidenced as different from the knowlege of it. We shall be requiring another knowledge to cognise the difference between that and its object, and so on ad infinitum. Generalisation is possible here, it might be thought, without completely enumeratin all instances. "All knowledge, *qua* knowledge, is different from its object, like any one or two accepted cases of such difference."* Is this very inference, as a case of knowledge, different from its object? This is to ask, whether the 'all' contains the very statement itself.** If not, nothing is achieved, as we are faced with the same regress. If included, we have here a palpable case of knowledge being at once its own subject and object. The same criticisms apply to a more general argument such as, "Each entity, *qua* entity, is different from all others" etc. This militates against the entities being conceived as entities; each is just what the other is not; everything is unique. Certainly, the knowledge of an entity cannot be proved different from the entity.

† *Khaṇḍana*, p. 150. (Chowkhamba ed.)

* *Ibid.*, p. 161. ** *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Attempts at directly knowing the relation would be given up. Implication may be relied upon to evidence the difference between knowledge and object. The object changes; one object lapses into non-being and another comes into being. And for the perception of change, a stationary consciousness is indispensable. If of two things, one changes and the other is immutable, the things in question are essentially different; the change of the one and the immutability of the other is untenable without their being different. The implication would be quite impeccable if we were dealing with anything other than knowledge. It must be thought to be present, to be simultaneous with one object, and then on the latter's lapse with another and so on, demanding at each stage an apprehension of their togetherness. And togetherness is not, for the reasons already urged, a fact of experience. "Stationariness of knowledge" is a relational property born out of contrasting knowledge with the change of the object; it is not intrinsic to knowledge. The latter may be stationary, immutable, but it cannot know and characterize itself as stationary. And without such characterization the implication is inapplicable.

Differences proving untenable, the independent existence of object cannot with any plausibility be upheld.

Does the object enjoy an existence dependent upon knowledge? To essay an answer to the question, the precise nature of the dependence has to be determined. That the object exists *in* knowledge can be proved only if they are known as related, as together. Togetherness or compresence, if it is significant, can only mean objective

togetherness. Knowledge then ceases to be knowledge and has become an object.

The object is necessary for knowledge, as it determines the latter by giving it a content; and it is by knowledge that the content is apprehended. Dependence is thus mutual—there being no knowledge without a content and no content that is not known. To assert the necessity of object for knowledge we must be in a position to apply the rule—"no object, no knowledge". Absence of knowledge consequent on the absence of object must be known by a consciousness. This latter cannot in turn be conditioned, without inviting an infinite regress. All attempts to show that knowledge is conditioned will but serve to demonstrate its unique self-evident character. What is the object in itself without knowledge, we have no means of knowing. The relation is thoroughly one-side; the object is a free floating adjective (a *vivarta*) of knowledge. To say all this is merely to paraphrase the notion of object, its knownness. All the Vedāntic arguments to prove the illusoriness of the world do but emphasise the 'knownness' of the object (*dṛśyatvāt, jaḍatvāt*).* The utter disappearance of the floating adjective is indeed a reasonable demand of our assertion that the object is accidental to knowledge, that it is a *vivarta*. The 'rope-snake' is found to be nothing where it appeared to shine. Objectvity, if it were illusory, should disappear, must melt away when its illusoriness is known. All our declarations of its illusoriness—the present enquiry included—do not, however, seem to annul the object. The very declaration

* Cf. *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 232 ff.

will stand out as an object when all others disappear. The illusoriness of objectivity demands—if it is to be thorough—that the illusoriness should itself be illusory (*Mithyātvarmithyātva*). This means that reality is an ever-accomplished fact; our sense of its being achieved or known through our effort is illusory.

The investigation in the above sections might have helped us to understand the contention of Vedānta that the world is illusory, and that it is a product of ignorance. Subjective facts arise out of a covert importation of objects and their characteristics in the realm of the spirit. Differences being untenable, objects can be said to exist neither independently nor dependently.

To sum up:

1. The tenability of objectivity rests on the validity of the subject-object relation, and the latter on the provability of difference of the subject from the object and *vice versa*. The difference, to be assertible, depends on their known togetherness. This would necessitate knowledge being made an object. The argument can be impugned only by showing that difference is irrelevant to the existence of the object, or by proving that knowledge itself is an object. The externality or independence of the object can be questioned only by denying its basis. The fundamental principle of Idealism must therefore be stated as that 'knowledge is not known; yet it is indubitably certain, self-evident'. In this form, it is exactly antithetical to the Realistic formula, which should be stated as 'knowledge is known' or that 'Knowledge of an object is but another object.' Only on such a tacit objectifying of knowledge can the independence, and, therefore, the reality of objects be upheld.

For, no object is visible in another; their independence of one another is patent. The usual way of stating the Idealistic formula, *Esse* is *percipi*, is ambigious and misleading.

2. The admission of objects leads necessarily to differences in the objective, as the character and the characterised etc. If all objects were indeterminate and homogeneous, to speak of them in the plural is without justification. All objects being identical, they will together be one with knowledge in extent and duration. Neither knowledge nor the object would change, yielding place to anything new. A difference between the two based on the more or less extensity of the one or the other cannot be apprehended if both were invariably and unalterably present. No spatial limitation is possible or apprehendable without temporal limitation. No relation, no difference, is conceivable, if at least one of the relata were not available apart from the relation. The indeterminate, if it is to be accepted as an object, must therefore issue in differences. It is not by accident that Ajñāna is the cause of the manifold of plurality—*Prapañca;* it must change and multiply. Every given object is therefore taken as in some way connected with others not given, engendering thereby relations of substance and attribute, whole and part etc. We have tried to indicate that no relations can be given. The corollary that is to be drawn from this is that there is *no unitary object*. An object, to be distinguishable from knowledge, must always issue in differences, into parts external to one another and to thought. And this must go on *ad infinitum*. To support an initial lie, we have to continue lying. The object, hence, is conceived

in Vedānta as limited (*paricchinna*) in space, time and by other entities.* Inversely, if an 'object' were unitary, it will not be external to thought; no difference is possible between it and knowledge. An absolute identity therefore exists between Spirit and Brahman—(Pure Being) which is infinite and has no parts.

It also follows that unity is not an object of thought. No object, *qua* object, is unitary; to seek for unity in the objective is to pursue a chimera. Knowledge, consciousness alone is truly infinite and unitary—*Akhaṇḍa*. Nor is unity constituted by the relation of subject and object, as held by the Hegelian, countenanced by Vedānta. If it were an object, it would not be unitary, for the said reasons; if it were merely the subject, then it is not a unity of subject and object.

3. Once we consciously abolish the several unreal differences by an all-embracing negation, absolute identity would result; there would be nothing to prevent the ever-present identity from being realised as a fact.

Reference.—Difference (*Bheda*), as it constitutes the world (*Prapañca*), is vehemently and invariably refuted in all Vedāntic treatises. The best and most original refutation is to be found in *Khaṇḍana*, 1st Pariccheda; also in *Citsukhī*, 2nd Section and *Nyāya-makaranda*, 1st Section.

For a thorough treatment of the subject-object relation, see *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 453 ff. (dṛg-dṛśya-sambandhabhaṅgaḥ).

* Cf. *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 315: Paricchinnatvam api hetuḥ. Tac ca deśataḥ, kālataḥ, vastutaś ceti trividham.

6

Ajñāna—One or Many

Ajñāna, to gather from what has been said, is not absence of knowledge; it is wrong knowledge or belief in things 'not existing where they are presumed to do so.' Belief persists and engenders other beliefs till it is dissipated by right knowledge. Things of the world arise as sequences of the fundamental belief in the reality of the object. This is Mūlājñāna; it has no traceable beginning or logical explanation. Itself a beginningless illusion (*anādyadhyāsa*), it is the cause of all others. Like a wedge driven in a seamless piece of wood, or like darkness intervening between the knower and the known, Ajñāna 'creates' differences where none exists in reality. And the primordial difference is the one between subject and object; what is infinite is sundered into a mutually opposed duality. Though presupposed by thought, no tenable evidence is found for it. Therefore, a knowledge of it was pronounced mere 'belief' or error. Questions about error, 'Who is erring?' 'What is it about?' are, thus, intelligible. The determination of the oneness or otherwise of Ajñāna depends on the nature of its locus (*Āśraya*) the person deluded—and the object (*Viṣaya*). Difference in knowledge is made on two grounds—on the difference of the knowing minds and on that of the objects known. As a species of knowledge, difference in ignorance is traceable to one or the other of these grounds.

Can the *Āśraya* (locus) of Ajñāna be many? *Prima facie*, it would appear that there is nothing to prevent a

number of persons from being deluded at once by some identical false belief; collective illusions are not uncommon. The conception of the Āśraya does not, however, favour a plurality of ignorance on that account. By 'Āśraya,' we must understand a self-conscious centre, the subject that is aware of his ignorance. Without such awareness no discussion about Ajñāna could have been initiated; a denial too of Ajñāna is not possible. The subject, aware as he is of ignorance, is not subject to its sway; his self-conscious nature is absolutely unimpaired; technically, it is 'uncovered' (*anāvṛta*) by ignorance. Always a subject and never an object, no characters, no limitation can pertain to consciousness. Ajñāna, known as an object, cannot be said to *belong to* consciousness, or be in it. But what else can be the locus of Ajñāna except that which knows it? It is not known to exist elsewhere. The relation of Ajñāna to consciousness is, thus, one-sided. The relation though unreal, does not require any other ignorance to bring it about, as this would lead to an infinite regress. With Ajñāna its relation to consciousness is *ipso facto* given.* The two—Ajñāna and its relation—constitute one and the same fact; the very nature of the object necessitates its relation with consciousness.

Can there be many self-conscious centres? On the plurality of self-conscious centres rests the plurality of Ajñāna. It is commonly held—and there are Vedāntic writers too to support this belief—that the Egos, Jīvas are the seats of Ajñāna; they only suffer from it; only

* *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, I, 52, 53, 55.

they need liberation. The great Vācaspati Miśra is credited with the doctrine that the Jīvas are the *loci* of Avidyā, while the absolute (Brahman) is its object (*jīvāśrayā brahmaviṣayā avidyā*). On the accepted plurality of the seats of ignorance is the liberation of souls explicable; those individuals that acquire a knowledge of their identity with the Absolute attain liberation; others remain in bondage. Otherwise, with the acquisition of knowledge by one, others should, *eo ipso*, be liberated. Or, we should suppose that none has attained Mukti till now. Neither of these alternatives is plausible. It is but reasonable to hold that in all the ages past one or two individuals—at least the teachers of Vedānta—did attain salvation; and if with them the rest of the world had shared the benefit gratuitously, we would not have been here to discuss the plurality of the seats. If none had attained Mukti, it is futile, if not presumptuous also, to hope that an acquisition of knowledge will lead to any better result in our case. A variant of this 'Jīva-locus' theory is sometimes advocated. Ignorance, though one like a universal (*jāti*) has many seats, like the universal inhering in many particulars (*vyakti*). When one individual acquires knowledge, ignorance leaves him but continues as before in others. The universal abandons that particular (*vyakti*) which is destroyed, but is available in others.*

The difference between self-conscious centres that is requisite for their plurality must be made on some ground

* In an admirable dialectical passage in the *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka* seven views about Ajñāna are mentioned and all of them are refuted. See II 132-138.

other than the possession of ignorance itself. Is the difference to be apprehended by right knowledge or by a false one, or immediately through consciousness?† If by right knowledge, it is certain that the different self-conscious centres are merely objects of one centre; as objects they cannot be selves or self-conscious. Besides, the differences and the ignorances would become real and irremovable. If a plurality of self-conscious centre is only apparently, falsely cognized, then in reality there are not many self-conscious entities. And it is not a fact of experience that many self-conscious centres are immediately patent to me. Without importing tacitly, none the less illegitimately, bodily limitations into the realm of Spirit no difference between self-conscious centres can obtain. The conclusion can be reiterated that only the undifferentiated self-conscious spirit (*nirvibhāga citi*) is the seat of ignorance; and it is one.* A conditioned product—one that is logically, if not temporally, posterior to Ajñāna, the Ego cannot be its seat. All the great Vedāntic writers are agreed in declaring this.**

In adducing evidence for Ajñāna reliance was placed on such experiences as: 'I was not knowing anything in sleep', 'I do not know myself and others' etc. These statements prove that the 'I' or the Ego is the seat of

† These are the very alternatives stated in *Saṃ Śārī*, II, 147.

* The famous śloka of *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, I. 319, also I. 21, II. 212 etc. "Āśrayatvaviṣayatvabhāginī nirvibhāgacitireva kevalā; pūrvasiddhatamaso hi paścimo nāśrayo bhavati nāpi gocaraḥ".

** *Vivaraṇa*, p. 45. Advaitasiddhi, pp. 577 ff. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī has tried to justify Vācaspati's view on the contention that Jīvas being Anādi, there is no Anyonyāśraya either in the origin or the continuance of Jīvas and in their being the seats of ignorance.

Ajñāna. It cannot also be denied that the Ego is conscious of his ignorance, as none else is. This seems to be the view of Śaṃkara too when he asks, 'whose is this ignorance', and answers, 'it belongs to you who ask me'.* The close and almost inalienable association of the 'I' with Avidyā, with the Upādhi, is however to be explained in two ways. All the undesirable consequences arising out of a contact with Avidyā falls entirely to the lot of the Ego. The reflected image alone is distorted in size and shape due to the faults of the mirror—*Upādheḥ pratibimbapakṣapātitvāt*. Thanks to the limitation enjoined by the Upādhi (*Antaḥkaraṇa*), Spirit, as the Ego, knows itself to be limited, and is subject to the limitation of Space, Time and other entities. An impartial spectator, Sākṣin merely intuits. Though Ajñāna belongs to him, it is only the Ego who knows explicitly that he is ignorant.† In a very legitimate sense can the Ego be said to be the legal heir to the ignorance of the undifferentiated consciousness. Secondly, it is only the Ego that can dispel Ajñāna;† the Sākṣin, as alreadly seen, is not hostile to its presence.

Ignorance is not many on the basis of the plurality of its seats; there is the other ground—the object (*viṣaya*) on which it can be many. With knowledge, the object is what is 'meant', the content actully present in it. The case is different with Ajñāna. The real object never appears in illusion; and what appears is cancelled subsequently by knowledge. When we perceive the 'snake' we are ignorant of the rope, for a knowledge of it

* *Br. Sūtra Bhāṣya*, IV. i, 3 : "Kasya punar ayam aprabodha iti, yas tvaṃ pṛcchasi tasya te iti vadāmaḥ".

† *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, II. 164, 165.

cancels the illusion. That alone is the object of ignorance which, when known, cancels the illusion. The object of ignorance is identical with the real basis of illusion—*Adhiṣṭhāna.* Though known only subsequently, the object is prior to the occurrence of the illusion; without the Adhiṣṭhāna no illusion can happen. The rope must exist and be apprehended, however vaguely, before it can be mistaken for the snake. Otherwise, a knowledge of the rope should have nothing to do with the dispelling of the illusion or the vanishing of the 'snake'. The object of ignorance is an accomplished fact—a *siddhavastu;* it does not change with the illusion or its cancellation, with the appearance and disappearance of the 'snake'. When the rope is known it is invariably coupled with the conviction that it has been there, and could have been seen but for our fault, ignorance.

There is unanimity of opinion with regard to the object of ignorance. Brahman or the absolute undifferentiated consciousness (*nirvibhāga citi*) alone is the object. A knowledge of Brahman alone cancels the world-illusion. Posterior to the Ajñāna which conditions them, empirical things, severally and together, cannot be the objects of ignorance. The considerations urged in the previous sections might have helped us to understand their illusoriness; they seem real till the reality for which they are mistaken is known; they are conditioned by the ignorance of the real. Only the unconditioned, the self-evident can be the object of ignorance.*

Not falling within the judgment, Reality is the ultimate subject to which all our judgments refer; it is

* *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka,* I. 319.

the ideal of our endeavours—intellectual and practical. Difference is possible on a basis of identity; differents as subject and object are differents of a pervasive identity. Every time we know an object this identity, apparently sundered, is made manifest, vindicated as it were. Duality, though to a limited extent and duration, is overcome, transcended.

The *a priori* condition of any object being known is its identity with the knowing consciousness.* Nothing is truly external to thought; the remotest object is within it, else the object will be a sheer non-entity. It is quite in keeping with the sole reality of the Infinite-consciousness that it is conceived as threefold, the subject-consciousness (*pramātṛ-caitanya*), object-consciousness (*viṣaya-caitanya*) and knowledge-consciousness (*pramāṇa-caitanya*). Only the limitations (*avaccheda*), which are accidental, differ, not the underlying reality. This unobtrusive and pervasive identity escapes us; space in which finite bodies move and have their being is quite unnoticed, the bodies engrossing all our interest and attention. Pure Being which provides, as it were, the plane on which entities can appear is neglected, as it serves no practical purpose of ours. We have everything to do with specific objects and nothing at all with Pure Being. There is no knowledge, however mean and poor, in which Reality or unity is not incipient. The function of any empirical psychosis (*Vṛtti*) is conceived by Vedānta to consist in removing the limitations intervening, or in manifesting the ever-present identity between subject and object. But the identity thus brought about by the Vṛtti is by its nature

* *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 489. *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, pp. 47-8.

limited (*avacchinna*). When we know the flower or the table, the Reality (consciousness) as determined by the empirical objects is known. It is not possible to experience Reality as infinite by having a number of perceptions of empirical objects, or by collecting them. The infinite thus achieved is spurious; it is a sort of endlessness, mere repetition, not a true whole. Only a knowledge in which the empirical determinations do not appear constitutes the experience of the infinite—*Akhaṇḍa*; that alone cancels the world illusion.

From the foregoing, it is inevitable that the locus and the object of ignorance should not only be one, but be identical. The real object of ignorance must not only be prior to ignorance, but be indubitable, undifferentiated and perfect. All these conditions are satisfied only by consciousness which, we have seen, is the seat of ignorance. A difference between the locus and the object of ignorance would necessitate the acceptance of two reals. *Both* of them cannot be independently real. Consciousness, as the locus of ignorance, shall in any case have to be real; without knowledge it is not possible to know any other as real, even if the latter were independent of knowledge. Self-evident knowledge alone is real. How can the self-evident be ignorant, not know itself? It is like asserting that darkness and light work in unison. Either the self-conscious is not ignorant, or what is ignorant is not self-conscious. No such opposition, however, holds between the self-conscious spirit and ignorance. The spiritual function of intuiting is equally and invariably present whatever be the object.* On the

**Vivaraṇa*, p. 43; *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 587. "Paripūrṇādyādyākāreṇa idanīṃ vyavahārābhāve 'api, aparokṣa-yogyavyavahārasyānapāyāt."

contrary, the experience of the Sākṣin bears evidence to the presence of Ajñāna. What is hostile to the latter is a specific knowledge of the real. This is always a particular mental modification—Vṛtti—a conscious exercise of reason having a definite beginning in time. It is a self-condemned narrowness to think that Spirit in knowing anything other than itself, in knowing matter, ceases to be spirit. Spirit is tolerant and hospitable.

A more serious objection is the incompatibility implied in one indivisible entity being at once the subject and the object of ignorance. It was urged in the previous sections that ignorance is known as an object by Spirit (the Sākṣi); it is now declared to have Brahman for its object (*Viṣaya*). And Spirit, being identical with Brahman, is thus at once the subject and the object of ignorance. The self-conscious subject—the locus of ignorance—is not subject to the sway of ignorance; the object, however, is not known; it is covered as long as ignorance continues. To maintain that Spirit is both the subject and the object of Ajñāna is to say that one and the same entity is both subject and not subject to ignorance, is both known and unknown. Without at least a distinction of parts this incompatibility cannot be overcome or even explained. The admission of real parts in Spirit is abhorrent to Vedānta. Either the Spirit and Brahman are not identical *pace* the Advaitic doctrine, or Brahman is not the object of ignorance, which is itself an object of the Spirit. Otherwise, either a duality is unavoidable, or the spirit would be both the knower and the known. All this runs counter to the accepted Vedāntic doctrine that Spirit is neither the knower nor the known, but an a infinite whole—*Prajñāna-ghana*.

The objection, however, is based on a misconception; it is in a peculiar sense that Brahman is the object of ignorance. Brahman is not a determinate object that is set against the apprehending thought. Brahman is experienced when the world is not known, when no determinations appear as contents in knowledge. With the falling away of the content, the object in the received sense, the subject is the sole existent. To call it 'subject' then is a misnomer, for the distinction between subject and object does not exist. The Absolute is experienced, 'known', when consciousness is infinite and undetermined by any content. Only on the identity and indivisibility of Reality can its division into the subject and the object be said to be due to ignorance. The locus and object of ignorance are one and identical.*

Its locus and object proving one and identical, ignorance too is one—these being the only two grounds on which it could have been many. This has very important consequences on several leading tenets in the Advaitic System. No difference can be made between Māyā and Avidyā, as it is done by certain writers. The conception of the Individual (*Jīva*), the Theory of Perception and Error and lastly, the doctrine of Jīvan-mukti—all these have to be brought in conformity with the oneness of Ignorance. Only the main features of these can be noticed here.

[A distinction between Avidyā and Māyā is made on two grounds. Māyā† is the upādhi of the Lord—Īśvara—whom it

* *Vivaraṇa*, p. 43.

† For the conception of Īśvara having for his upādhi Māyā, see *Pañcadaśī*, II. 42 ff; *Siddhāntaleśa*, pp. 79 ff.

helps, as the material or Śakti, in the creation of the world; the other is the Upādhi of the individuals. Objects common to all, unlike the 'rope-snake' that is peculiar to the deluded person, must be the modifications of Māyā—the power of the Lord. Secondly, though an Upādhi, Māyā does not delude the locus, the person bearing it, as Avidyā does. Expressed in a slightly different form, in the one the power of creativity is predominant (*Vikṣepa-prādhānya*), while in the other it is the function of 'covering' that is foremost (*Āvarṇa-prādhānya*).

Not even a tittle of evidence is available for the existence of Māyā apart from Ajñāna. Is the former to be proved on the strength of right knowledge or a wrong one or immediately through self-consciousness—the very alternatives considered with regard to the plurality of Ajñāna.* The distinctions of the Lord, Jīva, and Brahman consequent on the distinction between Māyā and Avidyā would become ultimate and irremovable, if right cognition proves the distinction of Māyā from Avidyā; for no subsequent knowledge will arise to cancel this valid cognition. Falsely it might be supposed that Māyā is the material cause of the world, while Ajñāna engenders only illusions peculiar to the individuals. But this false supposition in virtue of which Māyā is thought to be the cause of the world is more primordial and extensive; the Māyā becomes a creation of my false supposition, my Ajñāna. It is palpably untrue to say that Māyā is known immediately through self-consciousness. I know directly that I am ignorant, and not that Brahman or Īśvara has Māyā.

We must, therefore, take courage in our hands and declare that all empirical phenomena, all distinctions between the Lord and the Souls, mind and matter, and even the distinction of

* *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, II. 142 ff.

the teacher and the taught are the modifications of one's own ignorance.**

With the oneness of Ajñāna the conception of the individual (Jīva) has to be brought into relation. If Jīva is conceived as the consciousness having Ignorance as its upādhi, only one such entity, from the nature of the case, is possible; others are Jīvas by courtesy (Jīvābhāsa). Advocates of the "one-soul-theory" (Eka-jīva-vāda), e.g., the author of the *Siddhānta-muktāvalī*, therefore, very logically start with the one-ness of Ignorance and of Self-consciousness.* On this theory, there is no mukti for the 'souls', as there is only one individual. All declarations in the scriptures about the liberation of Vāmadeva, Śuka etc. are to be understood as inducements to achieve freedom. Any objection against this theory has to be met on the analogy of dreams.

It is however quite in keeping with Advaitism, without at once doing any undue voilence to common sense, to conceive Jīva, not as one with the Sākṣin—the consciousness having Ajñāna for its upādhi—but as the Ego limited by the Antaḥkaraṇa, a modification of Ignorance;† the Sākṣin is the original entity (Bimba) while the reflections (Pratibimba) in the several Antaḥkaraṇas represent the Egos. There can be as many egos as there are upādhis to engender reflections. The

** *Saṃkṣepaśāriraka*, II, 163, 170.

* *Siddhāntamuktāvali*, p. 16. Ata eva ajñānasya Jīvopādhitvāt, tasya ca ekatvāt, tadupahīta Ātmā jīvo bhavann eka eva bhavati iti, eka-jīva-vādino vadanti. Tathāpi bahavo Jīvā anubhavasiddhā iti cet, bhavatu tarhi svapnavad vyavasthā p. 20.

† That Jīva is the reflection—Pratibimba—in the Antaḥkaraṇa is the view of the author of the *Vivaraṇa* and others. On a less generally accepted view, Jīva is the consciousness circumscribed (avacchinna) by the Antaḥkaraṇa; some difficulties about transmigration and the presence of the Antaryāmin are encountered here. See *Siddhāntaleśa*, pp. 29 ff.

Ego would thus seem to be doubly conditioned, not only by Ignorance but by its modification—Antaḥkaraṇa—as well. This was brought out by showing the indispensability of the Sākṣin for the Ego. The two are not different entities, any difference in them being traceable to that of the upādhis. The distinction would ultimately seem to rest on the necessity of barely apprehending something, intuiting it, before it can be apperceived. And to apperceive is to compare, discriminate and to relate. Only a consciousness that is limited can do so, not the Sākṣin. Liberation would mean, for the individual, his ceasing to be an ego i.e. ceasing to be a reflection and becoming one with the Sākṣin, the Bimba, final and complete deliverance coming, as on the former view, only on the cessation of the one cosmic Ignorance.* It is thus seen that all the doctrinal differences between these two Vedāntic Schools are based on the diverse conceptions of Jīva.

Modes of conceiving the Jīva will have some significant consequences on the Theory of Perception. Jīva, in one view, is taken as the consciousness having Ignorance for its upādhi; it is therefore all-inclusive (sarvagata). On the other, it is the Ego limited by the Antaḥkaraṇa. Even on the first view, it is possible to hold Jīva as 'covered' (*āvṛta*) or 'uncovered' (*anāvṛta*) by Ignorance. If uncovered, a mental modification—Vṛtti—is necessary, not to illumine things—for the knowing consciousness is present everywhere—but to give knowledge a content, to determine it (Viṣayoparāga); difference in content is impossible without difference in the Vṛttis. If the All-embracing Jīva is 'covered' by Ignorance, the function of the Vṛtti is to rend the obstructing medium to enable consciousness to shine forth (Āvaraṇābhi-

* Bhūyaścānte viśva-māyānivṛttiḥ.

bhava). On the more homely and generally accepted conception of Jīva as the Ego limited by the Antaḥkaraṇa, the Vṛtti is required to manifest the ever-present identity between Brahman and the Ego. The identity is not an object of thought, but is the very condition of anything being known. In a case of inference and other mediate knowledge, the Vṛtti does not reach out to the objects but is confined within, and hence the object of inference is not immediately given. For immediacy, the Ego (Pramātṛ), the object-consciousness (Viṣaya-caitanya) and the Vṛtti must become identical, at least for the time being; in inference and other mediate sources of knowledge only the Vṛtti and the Pramātṛ are together.*

The doctrine of the "Degrees of Truth" (*sattā traividhya*) depends entirely on the plurality of Ajñāna. The dream-world is sublated everyday on waking up; illusions as 'rope-snake' etc. are cancelled while all the empirical objects continue as before. The distinction of the illusory (Prātibhāsika) from the Phenomenal (Vyāvahārika) is feasible only on the supposition that the Ajñāna conditioning the former ceases, while the primordial Ajñāna—the cause of empirical world continues, till it is cancelled by a knowledge of the absolute. Coupled with this is the doctrine that there are as many Ajñāna as there are Vṛtti-jñāna;** with the rise of a psychosis, a particular Ajñāna comes to an end. A plurality of Ajñāna is untenable for the reasons already adduced; the various Ajñānas are ultimately to be traced to one. Some attempts to explain the distinction of the illusory and the empirical are more fanciful than convincing.† The

* *Advaitasiddhi* p. 490. For a subtle and more detailed working out of the theory of perception, see *Advaitasiddhi*, section "Pratikarma Vyavasthā", and *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā*, chap. I.

** Yāvanti jñānāni tāvantyajñānāni.

† *Siddhāntaleśa*, pp. 158; *Advaitasiddhi*, p. 490.

difference between the Prātibhāsika (Illusory) and the Vyāvahārika (Phenomenal), on the acceptance of the one-ness of Ajñāna, is to be conceived as one of degree, not of kind. Ajñāna is not cancelled (*bādhita*), but is merely put off (*nivṛttimātram*).*]

* *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, p. 148.

7

Cessation of Ajñāna

The concept of ignorance implies its necessary cancellation by a subsequent right knowledge; the 'snake' is pronounced illusory, because we subsequently come to know that 'it' was but a rope, and with that the illusion collapses. The declaration of the world as illusory—subjective as well as objective facts are included in this sweeping declaration—shall remain an article of faith if we fail to point to some experience which would annul the world entirely. This may be thought unnecessary, as we have already endeavoured to show by theoretical considerations the untenability of the independent or dependent existence of objective and subjective facts. If flaws could be detected in the arguments, we should rectify them. The reflection in the mirror and the bent stick in water can be demonstrated not to exist in their apparent form in those places. The persistence of the appearances inspite of our reasoned persuasion is due to the presence of the respective media—the upādhis. The world-illusion is akin more to such appearances than to the 'rope-snake' and 'shell-silver.' It is forgotten, however, that the upādhi in the case of the world-illusion is but ignorance, which is as false as the illusion. Otherwise, a real upādhi enjoying an existence in its own right will militate against Advaitism; there shall be nothing to distinguish it from the Sāṃkhya. Our arguments and criticisms have not been in vain; they have imparted some plausibility to the Vedāntic thesis about the nullity

of the world and the unimpaired existence of spirit even after its dissociation from the object. The world should not even appear; but to all intents it is there as ever.

"A thinking criticism of things" (*manana*) is inadequate; thought about Advaitism is not the experience of Advaitism. The very thought stands in the way. Advaitic theory is but one content, a thesis which—to be advocated and maintained—has to be defended against, and distinguished from, other theories. And this necessitates difference, distinction and flux—Saṃsāra. To experience Brahman is not to know the world, not to be caught in the meshes of relations and difference. This is inevitable so long as we remain on the thought-level. Thought cannot grasp the infinite, anything truly unitary and undifferentiated; it has to sunder everything and identify itself with one part, and only then can it relate. The very best service that it can render is negative; thought can realise its own inadequacy to cognise the infinite; self-criticism is not inconsistent or insignificant. "Is it credible that the absolute truth should descend into the thoughts of an Ego equipped with a few special senses and with a biassed intellect............Possession of the absolute truth is not by accident beyond the range of particular minds; it is incompatible with being alive, because it excludes any particular station, organ, interest or date of survey; the absolute truth is undiscoverable just because it is not a perspective."* The Ego identifies itself with a portion of the field of intuition, and from that particular station views the rest; it is wedded to a perspective by its very constitution. The sense of the 'I'

* Santayana, *The Realm of Essence*, xiii.

is scarcely, if ever, absent from our thought. Even the body imposes its sway. In reveries, dreams and specially in sound sleep, can the 'I' be said to be absent, unobtrusive. But the peace and security of sleep is but the peace of the womb; it is but a muffled and initial phase of disturbance, confusion, hope and fear. Matter is pregnant here with all its potentialities; everything is supressed, pent up, not annulled. It is drowsiness, not contemplation; unmitigated darkness, not intense light. It is no wonder that anon the world knocks at our door and finds a ready and welcome entry. Sleep is not freedom, but bondage without the sense of being in fetters· It is in no sense an achievement for which any credit is due, but a most primitive state. To achieve freedom is to transcend boldly all limitations which a station now and here imposes. "In other words, in order to reach Pure Being (Brahman) it is requisite to rise altogether above the sense of existence."†

A method, a discipline, to achieve freedom by abolishing the differences 'that' and 'what' so vital to discursive thought has to be suggested; the successive steps, which a method implies, are also to be indicated. The spiritual method is, in a sense more than one, opposed to the logical and scientific procedure.

For Science, the object is independent of the apprehending thought; it is something measurable, repeatable and public. The avowed aim of Science is to abstract the object, the content, from the knowledge of it, and to eliminate all grades of subjectivity—physical, physiological and psychical. The percept of a terrestrial observer

† Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

seeing the moon is 'vitiated' by all the kinds of subjectivity. To him it is a small shining disc not much larger than the dining plate. And even to the least poetically minded, the moon is pleasing and comforting. What is the moon in itself eliminating the observer, his perspective, his not over-accurate sense-organs and his suggestive and fertile brain is a task for science. Anything that is unique, immeasurable and undemonstrable is, for science, subjective. Knowledge and its relatedness to object are ignored by science or are thought irrelevant to the object.

With the admitted externality of the object is another feature invariably associated with logical reasoning and scientific procedure. It consists in finding the ground of any phenomenon in some other; any assertion is validated by resting it upon others better known, and these again upon others and so on, till ultimately the entire field is traversed, and all the phenomena fall into a coherent whole. Nothing is self-evident, i.e., immediately and unanalysably valid. To be fixed anywhere is stagnation, death to scientific procedure; there is no such thing as pure contemplation in science; the very soul of it is in distraction, flux (Saṃsāra).

The very reverse holds good in the spiritual discipline. The initial postulate of science is found untenable; and the object is at once reduced to the status of a mode, an adjective, of knowledge. The latter, for the first time, when the exaggerated importance paid to the object is reversed, claims the attention proper to it. The outgoing impulse of thought is restrained; instead, attention is fixed, to the exclusion of others, upon one object. It is contemplated; it is attended to and appre-

ciated for its own sake. The appearance is not taken as a *symbol of* something not actually in the fore-ground of intuition; if a colour, it is just this colour; if a sound, just that very sound. The appearance is not apprehended as the appearance *of* something; no hidden relation is posited, and hence no misapprehension is possible. Everything is known as what it is, inherently and unchangeably.

To contemplate is to view things essentially, *sub-specie aeternitatis*, not relatedly. When the appearance is taken as a quality of some substance in the background, attention, due to the emphasis of interest, naturally flags, and flows towards the substance. Distraction results. It is very conducive to animal life and existence to be alert and sensitive to the remotest things hidden in the background. The remotest signs have, by interpretation, to be related to entities not in the field. Animal existence profits by such sagacity and sets great store by it. Science exalts this attitude, and, though seemingly disinterested, caters to animal interests. We are animals first and rational beings afterwards. Though natural, a related view of things is false. Contemplation corrects this inveterate habit of ours to relate, to interpret given characters and use them as symbols. Practical interests are rigorously eschewed. To contemplate is to be a pure intellectual being.

With the contemplative attitude ingrained as a stable frame of the mind (*nididhyāsana*) the objects loses its diversity; the distinction between the character and the characterised does not arise. The presentation has no parts, no externality, and hence no relations. No difference, therefore, can be made between such an object

which is merely the 'that'—Pure Being and Intuition. On the sundering of the 'that' and the 'what' can a distinction be made in the objective, and on that does the distinction between subject and object rest.

[In a very illuminating treatise *Jīvanmukti-viveka*, Vidyāraṇya mentions Right Knowledge (*Tattva-Jñāna*), dissipation of the psychic dispositions (*Vāsanā-kṣaya*), and dissolution of the Psychic mechanism—the inner sense (*Mano-nāśa*) as together leading to Jīvanmukti (Freedom-while-living). The three help one another mutually. Distraction is foreign to the unchanging and invariable light of the Spirit, traceable as it is to the incessant restlessness of the inner sense. Discursive thought (*Saṅkalpa, Vikalpa*) is the identification of the immutable Spirit with the activity of Antaḥkaraṇa. Distraction is fostered by the impulses, mostly blind, hustling us forward in the mad pursuit after objects to satisfy the needs of the body and the Ego. When insight into the true nature of the spirit dawns, all this is found grotesque and irrational. Spirit refuses to be dragged and be made a pawn in the game of others. The checking of impulses (*Vāsanā-kṣaya*) results in greater mental poise and fuller insight. There is thus simultaneously a gradual "inwardising of the spiritual functions and a felt dissociation from the objective." Spirit recedes within itself till at last the whole process culminates in the utter dissolution of the impulses and the psychic mechanism (*Mano-nāśa*). The 'other' in thought disappears; the duality of subject and object is transcended. The experience of Brahman is *Akhaṇḍa*, partless, infinite. The avowed aim and method of spiritual discipline is, quite contrary to the scientific procedure, to eliminate all externality, all objectivity and reach the infinite.]

The *Akhaṇḍārtha Vṛtti* is thus the crowning phase of Vedānta—the very acme of human perfection. Here is

the identity of the self with the absolute experienced in its infinite and undefiled purity. We can never sufficiently guard ourselves against the mistakes of supposing that the identity is an object of knowledge, or that it is a unity *of* the differents—thought and object. Two differents can never be identical; they are falsely identified. The identity of intuition with Pure Being is achieved by negating all determinations (*deśakālavastukṛtaparicchеda*). They are hybrids constituted of Being and Non-being. They partake of Being, as they must be something in themselves before they could be distinguished from others. Determinations, however, partake of non-being in a very eminent degree; it is vital to their existence as determinations that they should be separated and distinguished from the rest. The more specific the determination, the more does it partake of Non-being. Pure Being is a negation of negations, of Non-being. When an infinity of negations, determinations, is denied, an infinity still remains. Pure Being is all Being and no Non-being.

"Pure Being is pure nothing, a sheer fiction" is a common-place held in uninformed circles. Unless Pure Being existed, determinate beings could not have being; nor could they be comparable in one plane of existence. Pure Being supplies as it were the very ground for them to be, very much like space for the specific bodies; only it does this more eminently, more universally. In this sense only, all objects are said to exist in Brahman by false identification. Such a hospitable, impartial and infinite being can meekly tolerate differences; determinations are differences of a homogeneous and pervasive continuity. Sheer difference without this Being in common between the differents is inconceivable. Otherwise, every deter-

mination will become unique and absolute, and hence incomparable with others, even to the extent of being distinguished from them. It is folly to decry and deny Pure Being. No difference can be made out between Pure Being and Spirit; neither has any character; and both of them are self-evident and immediate. They are declared, on this account, to be identical. The 'I' which stands for a specific entity must be cleared of its determinations, of its non-being, before its identity with Pure Being can be realised.

If the world-illusion began with the difference between knowledge and object, thought and reality, it is in the fitness of things that its cessation should be engendered by an act of knowledge which annuls the unreal distinction. In that experience there is no sundering of the content and its awareness; it is relationless and unitary, having the infinite *Akhaṇḍa* for its object.† An empirical example of *Akhaṇḍārtha* or Pure Identity is to be had in recognitive judgments e.g. "this is the same Devadatta (that I saw years ago)".* The import of the judgment does not lie in the identity of the *present* Devadatta with that of the *past* or vice versa; the qualifying adjectives—the two times—when emphasised will militate against an identity. The significance of the judgment lies in the identity of the individual (*vyakti*) *inspite of* the differences in time, i.e. the identity of the substantive (*viśeṣya*). Identity is maintainable on the oneness of

† *Akhaṇḍārtha* is defined as "Right cognition which is non-relational or the meaning that is confined to the subject (literally the substantive-base *prātipadikārthamātra*)." *Citsukhī*, p. 109.

* Cf. *Advaitasiddhi*, pp. 705 ff.

substantive, but not through characters. A character, *qua* character, has to be different from all others. The theory that identity is possible *in* difference or *because* of them would be acceptable if difference can in any way be shown to contribute *to* identity or be *in* it as an integral part. Difference cannot contribute to identity, but must always pre-suppose it. The identity of the subject is pre-supposed by the different predicates if they are to refer significantly to the *same* subject. It is quite possible that we may be mistaken about the identity of Devadatta; he may not be the same individual, appearances misleading us. But the identity of the person who makes the judgment about Devadatta's identity is necessarily implied in his being in a position to make any such judgment false or true. The ultimate import of any and every judgment, according to Vedānta, lies *in the identity of the subject;* the predicates are its free-accidental adjectives (*upalakṣaṇa*).

To realise the identity between the self and Pure Being is the highest human achievement. If the identity were not a fact it can never be achieved. If it were already realised, nothing is left for achievement. Realisation is, thus, a purely subjective affair; it is negative in character, consisting, as it does, in eschewing the sense of unrealisedness, unreal externality.

Representing a total suppression of discursive thinking, the *Akhaṇḍārtha Vṛtti* may be denied all claims to be an intellectual achievement; being a veiled form of mystic absorption, it is not in any but a Pickwickian sense knowledge. Knowledge is usually taken as the awareness of a content, a difference between them being thought essential; here it stands for the

awareness itself with no content. But unless it is shown that the elimination of the difference between content and awareness *ipso facto* does away with awareness itself, we should persist in calling the *Akhaṇḍārtha Vṛtti* knowledge, and we may be certain that an extinction of awareness is not cognisable, is not demonstrable.

The purely intellectual character of the achievement expressed in the infinite experience is evident from the inadmissability of achieving it through moral conduct—*Karma*. Nothing new is to be ushered into existence by an accumulation of merit. However, any virtue, as disinterested *Karma*, is useful as a preliminary. In the struggle of the spirit to free itself from the shackles of limitation, it is of the utmost importance that any aid which breaks down crampedness of outlook should be availed of. Benevolence and renunciation are but tangible expressions of freedom from narrow self-interests. To the spritually minded it must appear irrational and unjust that the needs of one body, one's own body, should demand and be paid exclusive attention. "Justice and charity will then seem to lie in rescinding this illegitimate pre-eminence of one's own body: and it may come to be an ideal of spirit not only to extend its view over all time and all existence, but to exchange its accidental point of view for every other, and adopt every insight and every interest: an effort which, by a curious irony, might end in abolishing all interests and all views".*

Disinterested *Karma* thus leads to an identification with larger and still larger interests culminating in a breaking down of the distinction of the moral agent and his

* Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, p. 215.

ideal; the ideal is no more external or unrealised. It was the force of insight, a persistent fidelity to truth and spiritual light that has been the guiding motive in *Karma*; for that alone was *Karma* intended.

Will the spiritual attainment—the union of the Ego with Brahman—as a finite event having a beginning in time, constitute a definite object set against the spirit? A duality seems unavoidable; objectivity may be exorcized away, but the exorcism will remain. When all objects are sublated by an all-embracing negative judgment, the very negation will be left over. It will but lead to an infinite regress without improving the situation, if the negation is negated by another judgment and so on.

All this rests upon a mistaken notion of the all-inclusive negation. On the analogy of the affirmative judgment, it is thought that negation too stands for a particular content. When I do not see any flower-vase on the table 'no-flower-vase' is not a character of the table or of knowledge. It is mere quibbling to say that the table is characterised by the negation or the absence of the vase. This is but a way of expressing the sole existence of the table. The existential import of a negative judgment is solely that of the subject of negation; a supposed relation of the predicate to the subject is negated. A negative content is no content; a negative predicate is but a predicate negated of a subject. When the presumed relationship of phenomena with consciousness is negated, what remains over is consciousness itself pure and undertermined; there is no content, no object.

The achievement expressed in the *Akhaṇḍa Vṛtti* may appear an event in time looking at it psychologically from without; the experience itself has nothing in

it which smacks of the now and here. If it had a content, in however an attenuated form, it might get related to other events and fall within a temporal or spatial order. In such an experience there is no self-gratifying assertion—"I was in bondage, now I am free". To make any such self-assertive judgment it is necessary to relate the present with the past; this militates against the *Vṛtti* being contentless. After the 'rope-snake' is cancelled, the memory of it does not totally cease to haunt us. This is intelligible, because the attendant circumstances continue unchanged; our psychical mechanism, egoity and memory etc. function as before; hence a sense of contrast between the false 'snake' and the real 'rope' surrounded by other real empirical objects is possible and knowable by the Ego. The absolute truth, however, is incompatible with the existence of the Ego, with a particular station in life. The psychical mechanism either ceases to function, consequent on the loss of interest and the lapse of impulses, or functions automatically. "The body may subsist afterwards automatically or perhaps generate new sensations and dreams, but these will not belong to the liberated spirit, which will have fled for good, fled out of existence altogether".* The cessation of the world-illusion brought about by the *Akhaṇḍa Vṛtti* is identical with Brahmahood, is indistinguishable from it (*Brahma svarūpa*)."†

* Santayana, *The Realm of Essence*, p. 61.

† The cessation of ignorance is also viewed as Anirvacanīya, or as forming a fifth and separate category by itself, the latter is the view of Ānandabodhācārya. He takes the 'cessation' to be an entity; it is not real, as it would contradict Advaitism; nor is it unreal like the sky-lotus; nor both; nor is it indescribable, for the indescribable has a material

Just short of final release, there is a stage in which freedom is consciously felt; it is a foretaste, as it were, of the fully liberated condition. The liberated spirit, without completely ceasing to be an Ego, enjoys freedom while-living (*Jīvan-mukti*). Rigour of logic would dictate that continuance as Ego is hardly compatible with the cessation of ignorance. There is no sense in pretending that the roots are severed though the tree is standing. There ranges a diversity of opinion about the tenet of *Jīvan-mukti*, some* rigorously denying it, while others with no less vigour defending it. It ill-becomes one to dogmatise in this matter. *Jīvan-mukti* (liberation while living) is a cherished cult and "has always been the goal of religious discipline in India and wherever else the spiritual life has been seriously cultivated". The continuance of the body and the psychical mechanism even after the experience of the infinite is accounted for by the continuance of the vital forces (*prārabdha-karma*) that have constituted this body. The forces cannot be stopped all at once. The momentum once imparted cannot be withdrawn, though no fresh addition is made to it; the potter's wheel or the wheels of the locomotive continue to revolve for a while, even after a total break, because of the momentum already given. It is held that a faint trace of Avidyā (*Avidyāleśa*) is left, enabling the liberated to exercise benevolence towards those in suffer-

cause like Ajñāna and this would continue in Mokṣa too. It therefore forms a fifth category. (See *Siddhantaleśa* p. 499 and *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka*, IV, 12, 13, 14). The author of the *Advaitadīpikā* holds that it is a category of Anirvacanīya. The cessation does but exist for a moment and then vanishes of its own accord.

* E.g. the author of the *Siddhāntamuktāvalī*.

ing. There is enough of the wordly touch in the liberated to enable him to feel a sense of kinship and sympathy with those less fortunate. It is his sacred task to enlighten them; the teaching itself has to be handed over in unintermittent succession (*vidyāsaṃpradāya*).

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CORRECTION SLIP

Page	Line	Read	For
26	32	the rope	the the rope
43	6	is not	not
48	17	a	in
96	10	truth	true
100	8	ad	add
101	17	knowledge	knokledge
111	8	facts	fact
127	2	leaves us	leaves
129	31	niradhiṣṭhāna	nirdhiṣṭhāna
139	2	nor	not
145	6	Sense-organ	Sense—organ